



LIBRARY OF HEAVEN'S PATH

by Heng Sao Tian Ya



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Library of Heaven's Path

– Tian Dao Tu Shu Guan –

- Part 6 -

-Author-

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[StarveCleric (Qidian International)]

Chapter 501

Demon Cinque Beast - Breakthrough

A few minutes later, the injuries of Elder Hu and the others had fully recovered. Every single one of them was overflowing with vitality.

"Thank you, Zhang shi..." The crowd expressed their gratitude.

Even though they had already paid for the services so they didn't owe anything to Zhang Xuan, the other party's medical skill was still simply way too astonishing. It was almost miraculous, and it was hard to believe that someone in the world was capable of such a feat.

"The Demon Cinque Beast has already been tamed by Zhang shi so it would be a waste of time if we were to remain here. Thus, I won't be imposing on you all any longer. Farewell!"

Hall Master Han clasped his fist and bade his farewell.

His primary objective here was to tame the Demon Cinque Beast. However, since Zhang shi had already tamed it, there was no reason for him to remain here any longer.

Even though he had failed to tame the Demon Cinque Beast, he had recovered from his trauma. With this alone, he was confident that he could triumph over Luo Ming and obtain the qualification to study at the headquarter.

So, his final objective could be said to have been met. In a sense, his trip wasn't wasted.

"Farewell!" Zhang Xuan, Hall Master Sai, and the others clasped their fists as well.

"Given how talented Zhang shi is, if I'm not mistaken, you should be participating in the Master Teacher Tournament two months from now, right? I'll definitely head there personally to support you!" Hall Master Han chuckled before leaving.

Given the extent of the other party's capability and his identity as a master teacher, and considering the major affairs surrounding the Myriad Kingdom City during this

period of time, it wasn't too difficult to deduce his next objective.

No matter what, he owed the other party a debt. If there was a chance, he would like to repay it. Besides, given the other party's immense capability and his proficiency in various occupations, he was a person worth befriending.

After Hall Master Han and the others left, the area grew quiet once more.

"Zhang shi, do we enter the tomb now or do we rest here first?"

Luo Zhu looked at Zhang Xuan with a look of admiration.

The previous time he came here, he had to operate secretly for fear of being noticed by the Demon Cinque Beast. Yet, the person before him had managed to tame this notorious fellow. This was something he could never have imagined in the past.

With the threat from the Demon Cinque Beast out of the way, there wasn't any reason for them to rush anymore. They could enter the tomb whenever they liked.

"Hold on for a moment. We'll enter after I solve the problem the Demon Cinque Beast is suffering from."

Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

"Problem? It isn't injured though..." The crowd was perplexed.

This big fellow possessed such mighty strength and its defense was invincible within the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. Even when battling against Hall Master Han and the others, it was able to crush all of them easily.

Solving its problem?

What kind of problem could it have?

"The Soul Devouring Ants don't have much of an influence on ordinary lifeforms and humans. However, they are yin attribute lifeforms—otherwise they wouldn't have sustained themselves by consuming souls—and after loitering around this area for a month or two, even if the Demon Cinque Beast didn't really come into contact with them, it would still be affected by the yin energy they exude."

Placing his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan explained impassively. "The intense battle just a moment ago caused the yin energy to seep into its internal organs. If it isn't cleared away swiftly, it'll be hard for it to achieve any breakthroughs in the future!"

"There's actually such a matter?"

"If that's the case, shouldn't we stay away from those Soul Devouring Ants as well?"

Upon hearing that even a powerful existence like the Demon Cinque Beast would be affected by the Soul Devouring Ants, everyone was alarmed. They immediately scanned their surroundings warily.

At this moment, after consuming the cooked Deerhorde Beast, the satisfied Soul Devouring Ants had burrowed back underground. Thus, there wasn't any trace of them left on the surface.

If they hadn't witnessed it personally, it would have been difficult for them to believe that this ancient creature, which hadn't been sighted for such a long period of time, truly existed in the world.

To consume even formations... It was truly a fearsome existence.

"It'll be fine as long as you all don't consume the water from the lake!" Zhang Xuan said, "The Soul Devouring Ants can sense that the soul oracle tomb is beneath the lake. Thus, even though the water may seem clean, it is actually filled with the corpses of these fellows. One of the main reasons why the Demon Cinque Beast is plagued by the yin energy of these fellows is due to drinking the water from the lake."

Everyone came to a realization.

These creatures were drawn here by the scent of the soul oracle tomb. Realizing that the tomb was beneath the lake, it was inevitable that some of them would be unable to resist the allure and attempt to head for the soul oracle tomb. As time slowly passed, the water became unsafe for consumption.

"Then... how can this problem be solved?" Luo Zhu asked.

Since even the Demon Cinque Beast could be plagued by the yin energy, what should they do if they were affected as well?

Everyone also turned their gazes over. They wanted to know the solution so that they would know what to do if they were to ingest the water from the lake accidentally.

"Simple, you just have to chew on the grass by the side!" Zhang Xuan pointed.

"Chew on the grass?" Taken aback, everyone instinctively turned to the Demon Cinque Beast, which was still busy chewing on the grass, with a dumbfounded expression.

They thought that Zhang Shi's act of ordering the Demon Cinque Beast to chew on grass was a punishment, but from the looks of it now, it seemed like he had another motive in mind.

This explained why this massive fellow didn't feel displeased in the slightest, it even went on and munched on the grass excitedly.

"If I'm not mistaken, this should be Bluerain Grass, right? This grass can be found all around the mountain. However, if I recall correctly, this grass should have no particular attribute at all. Why would eating this grass clear away the yin energy in one's body?"

Hall Master Sai was bewildered.

As an appraiser, he boasted vast knowledge. As such, he was able to identify the grass in an instant.

Bluerain Grass grew on mountainous areas that were near a water source. It didn't have any effect or attribute, and as such, it couldn't even be considered as a medicinal herb. Why would it be able to expel the yin energy from the Soul Devouring Ants?

"It's true that this grass primarily has no attribute or effect. However, one has to take their environment into consideration as well. If it's the patch of grass over there, it'll be completely ineffective!" Zhang Xuan pointed.

He was pointing at the dense bunch of Bluerain Grasses that grew by the side of the lake.

Everyone blinked their eyes in bewilderment.

It was just a distance of several dozen meters, why would the grass over there be ineffective? There was nothing different with their environment at all!

Seeing the doubt on everyone's faces, Zhang Xuan smiled and shook his head, "This is where the Demon Cinque Beast relieved itself... In other words, it is its toilet."

"Toilet?"

Everyone blinked.

"The Demon Cinque Beast carries the Dragon Bloodline, which is rich in yang energy. Naturally, its waste product carries powerful yang attribute. Under such nourishment, the Bluerain Grass in that area naturally took on this attribute as well."

After explaining, Zhang Xuan turned to look at them and said, "If you are worried, you can cut a few stalks and bring it along with you. The moment you realize that something is amiss, just take a bunch out and chew on it..."

"I'll pass..."

"Zhang shi, thank you for your advice. However, since you said it's fine, there should be no need to do so!"

Everyone hurriedly waved their hands.

They were still agitated over it a moment ago, but after learning that those were grass which the Demon Cinque Beast used to relief itself, they immediately lost their interest.

Knowing what the crowd was thinking, Zhang Xuan didn't touch on the topic any further. Instead, he walked up to the Demon Cinque Beast.

At this moment, this gigantic fellow had already consumed a huge quantity of Bluerain Grass already. The yang energy within its body was gradually searing the yin energy accumulated within its body.

Taking out a few silver needles, Zhang Xuan casually pierced them into several locations on the Demon Cinque Beast.

Boom!

A loud explosion sounded, and everyone immediately felt the Demon Cinque Beast's aura rising swiftly.

"Is it going to make a breakthrough?"

Hall Master Sai and Jin Conghai stared at one another in shock.

At Transcendent Mortal 5-dan, one's soul would become even more harmonized with the environment, thus augmenting one's strength greatly.

If the first four dans of the Transcendent Mortal realm, Prolonged Longevity, Origin Energy, Yin-Yang, and Clarifying Turbidity, could be considered as refining one's zhenqi and enhancing one's control over the environment, then from this realm onward, one's soul would be nourished and tempered.

This was precisely the reason why even though Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle master teachers, despite their strength, could only be only considered as 4-star master teacher. Unable to produce [Long-range Tutelage Jade Token], they couldn't be considered to have reached half 5-star.

Only when one's cultivation had reached Consonant Spirit would one be able to sever a sliver of one's soul to seal it within a Tutelage Jade Token to guide others.

One could say that the gap between Transcendent Mortal 4-dan and 5-dan concerned the metamorphosis of one's soul, and it was a major hurdle to overcome.

Many people were stuck at this step, unable to make a breakthrough until the end of their lives.

Despite the long history of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance and the innumerable talents who had come and gone, there were less than a few who had managed to surpass this boundary.

And for spirit beasts, due to their weaker souls, it was far harder for them to make this breakthrough compared to humans.

This fellow was already at Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle, and yet, at this moment, its aura was currently rising swiftly. Could it really be attempting to breakthrough to the Consonant Spirit realm?

The duo hurriedly turned their gazes over.

"It can't make the breakthrough yet!"

Seeing the agitation on the faces of the duo, Zhang Xuan replied calmly, "All beings in the world are made equal. Due to the overwhelmingly powerful physical body of the Demon Cinque Beast, it was harder for its soul to make a metamorphosis. Similarly, if one's soul is too strong, under normal circumstances, one's physical body wouldn't be too strong."

After contemplating for a moment, Zhang Xuan said, "However... after consuming the Bluerain Grass, the yin energy has melded as one with the yang energy. At the same time, I've also cleared some of its meridians. Thus, it's inevitable that it'll enjoy a huge leap in its cultivation. Even though this isn't sufficient for it to reach Consonant Spirit realm, Half-Consonant Spirit shouldn't be a problem!"

"Half-Consonant Spirit?"

"That's already very fearsome! If I recall correctly, the old ancestor of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance is also at this realm..."

Hearing those words, the duo still leaped in shock.

Half-Consonant Spirit, similar to Half-Zongshi and Half-Zhizun, referred to a person who was infinitesimally close to Consonant Spirit realm but had yet to take the last step forward.

Not only was the physical body of an expert at this level strong, his soul would tend to be exceptionally powerful as well. No Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert would be his match.

If say, the Demon Cinque Beast was already overpowered due to its Dragon Bloodline and talents, it would be even more fearsome now.

If it were to go on a rampage, even the old ancestor of Myriad Kingdom Alliance wouldn't be able to stand against it.

Formidable!

Hong long long!

Amidst the shocked gazes of the duo, the Demon Cinque Beast's rising aura finally came to a halt. Just as Zhang shi had guessed, it didn't manage to make the final breakthrough into Consonant Spirit realm, stopping at Half-Consonant Spirit instead.

Even so, with this strength, there was already no one who could subdue it in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance already.

Roar!

Knowing that it was only with his master's help that his cultivation had risen and his trauma resolved, it rushed forward excitedly to Zhang Xuan and bowed respectfully.

Previously, it had only feared the other party due to the high possibility of the other party being a Pureblooded Dragon due to his ability to utter the Dragon Language. However, at this moment, he felt truly grateful to the other party.

If not for him, it wouldn't have been able to reach this realm without a century of hard work.

Seeing its attitude, Zhang Xuan knew that this fellow was sincerely swearing fealty to him this time. Thus, he nodded his head in satisfaction and instructed, "That's right, we're diving to the bottom of the lake. Guard the area outside for us. If any human or beast dares to barge into this area, kill them without exception!"

The situation below was still a mystery, and having to watch their backs for enemies while exploring the region would've been troublesome.

With this large fellow guarding in the area, they wouldn't have to worry about any knives behind their back.

"Roar!" The Demon Cinque Beast nodded its head.

"Alright, let's set off!"

After giving out the necessary instructions, Zhang Xuan surveyed the surroundings before leaping into the lake along with Luo Zhu.

Zhao Ya and the others quickly followed suit.

After so much hard work... The soul oracle tomb was finally right before them.

Chapter 502

Celestial Designer

The lake was frigid and everyone immediately felt a bone-piercing chill as soon as they stepped in.

Following behind Luo Zhu, Zhang Xuan dived down into the lake.

Even the weakest among the crowd was at Zhizun realm. At that level, holding one's breath for twenty to thirty minutes wasn't a problem at all.

Even though Zhao Feiwu's cultivation was slightly lacking, Jin Conghai used his zhenqi to form a protective layer around her and kept transfusing zhenqi to her. As such, she was able to avoid suffocation.

Initially, with the light that shone through the surface of the lake, they could still see the situation before them. However, as they went deeper in, darkness began to envelop them.

Prepared, Luo Zhu took out a few Night Illumination Pearls and passed one to everyone. Under the gentle light, the underwater world appeared clearly before them.

Due to the excessive fridity of the water, there were no lifeforms in it. Swimming downward, at around a depth of seventy to eighty meters deep, they finally saw the bottom of the lake. Corals of various differing colors filled area.

It was impossible to speak underwater so Luo Zhu communicated via gesturing to the crowd. He adeptly maneuvered around the coral-filled ground and advanced. Before long, a cliff appeared before them.

The surface of the cliff was smooth, and it didn't seem as though there was anything unique about it. If one didn't know that a soul oracle tomb was hidden within it beforehand, it would be impossible to know that there was a hidden mechanism on it.

Flicking his wrist, Luo Zhu took out a stone plate, and after feeling about the wall for a moment, he found a precise aperture and inserted the stone plate into it.

Jiya!

A mechanism was activated. The cliff suddenly came to life and started opening up.

"What exquisite craftsmanship!"

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Even though it was a mechanism created out of rock, there wasn't even the slightest mark on its surface that betrayed its identity. It might be less intricate than the Celestial Designer Mechanical Container, but its craftsmanship was still far superior compared to the other artifacts he had seen before.

It seemed like the craftsman who built this soul oracle tomb was an expert. Even at worst, he must have at least reached 9-mo.

Legend had it that 9-mo craftsmen were capable of creating machineries and puppets which even Transcendent Mortal experts would be unable to see through. From the looks of it, the legend was indeed true.

It was no wonder why Luo Zhu was so confident that no one other than him would be able to find this location. Given how obscure the location was, it would indeed be very difficult to find it.

The opening of the cliff face revealed an entrance. Luo Zhu took the lead and stepped in.

There were several unique mechanisms to keep out water inside the cavern, blocking the flow of water. As the crowd stepped in, they immediately realized that the area was well-ventilated. There wasn't the slightest feeling that the room was stuffy that came from lack of oxygen.

"This is the passageway to the soul oracle tomb. At the very end is the tomb itself!"

After everyone entered the passageway, the cliff face automatically closed by itself.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The crowd looked at their surroundings in interest.

This was a narrow passageway. Under the illumination from the Night Illumination Pearls, the group saw all kinds of inscriptions on the surface of the wall. Most of them were regarding the various rituals that soul oracles conducted. A sinister air loomed in the area.

"We should proceed slowly. There are a lot of fearsome traps placed along the passageway!"

Familiar with the environment within the ancient tomb, Luo Zhu reached forward and two child-sized puppets appeared before him.

He had probably prepared these puppets specially for this occasion.

Placing two spirit stones into them, the puppets headed straight down the passageway.

Geji! Geji!

Barely after the first puppet took three steps, a strong gust of wind blew, and with a crisp sound, the puppet burst into smithereens.

Everyone narrowed their eyes.

The puppet that Luo Zhu took was crafted using a unique material known for its sturdiness. Even a cultivator of Jin Conghai's caliber would find it hard to smash it in a single blow.

And yet, some unknown mechanism before them had caused it to be reduced to smithereens in a moment. If not for Luo Zhu warning everyone swiftly, that could have been the fate of one of them.

In an instant, cold sweat immediately drenched the back of everyone here.

As expected of one of the most feared occupations in the ancient era, the soul oracle tomb was indeed extraordinary.

If Zhang Shi hadn't seen through Luo Zhu's possession and allowed the soul oracle to guide them through this area, their entire group would have most probably been wiped out before even reaching the soul oracle tomb.

Geji! Geji!

While everyone was still overwhelmed with shock, the second puppet advanced forward. However, barely after it took a few steps, just like the first puppet, it was smashed to smithereens as well.

"Within five steps, there are two death traps. I'll go on first and mark out the spot where you all should step on. Make sure to follow it closely, otherwise... I'll be unable to guarantee your safety!" Luo Zhu instructed gravely.

"Yes!" Knowing the importance of this issue, everyone nodded their heads.

Hu!

Luo Zhu proceeded forward carefully. However, as soon as he stepped forward, the whistling of the wind sounded and it shot past an area not too far away from him. From the looks of it, if one were to be struck by it, one wouldn't be too far from death even if one managed to survive that attack.

However, with a puppet to test out the path, they would be able to avoid the traps in the way.

Looking at the treacherous passageway, Hall Master Sai asked, "Is this... a formation?

"Given how danger was lying in wait throughout the passageway, could this be a Slaughter Formation?"

If that was the case, given Zhang Shi's understanding of formations, they should've been able to break it and advance safely through.

"It isn't!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

If it was a formation, he would have surely felt a disturbance in the spiritual energy in the air... But there clearly was none.

"The greatest fear of the soul oracles aren't humans but Soul Devouring Ants, and formations are ineffective on those creatures... Thus, it is unlikely for a soul oracle to incorporate a formation into their defensive mechanisms. If I'm not mistaken, these are mechanical traps!"

After a moment of contemplation, Zhang Xuan had finished his analysis.

The Soul Devouring Ants were the nemeses of soul oracles, so naturally, they had to prepare some traps to protect themselves. Soul Devouring Ants were capable of consuming the spiritual energy contained within a formation and forcefully halt it. Thus, mechanical traps were preferred as to formations.

The crowd nodded in agreement.

"But if those are all mechanical traps, this will prove to be troublesome. None of us here are adept in this field. If only we had a celestial designer here, we'd be really spared a lot of trouble!" Hall Master Sai frowned.

"Celestial designer?" Sun Qiang and the others looked over.

Zhang Xuan had never mentioned such an occupation so they had never heard of it.

"Indeed. Celestial designer, also known as master mechanic, is an occupation of the Lower Nine Paths. They are skilled in designing these mechanical systems. Even though their creation might seem humble on the surface, they usually incorporate sword qi and battle techniques that could overpower even experts when they are activated."

Hall Master Sai explained, "This occupation also has their own organization, the Celestial Designer Institute. They specialize in designing the world's most exquisite weapon and traps. However... I've only read about this occupation in books. There isn't a branch in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, and it's said that only an empire of Huanyu Empire's tier is qualified to build a branch."

"The artifacts designed by celestial designers are extremely complex and exquisite. It would indeed be difficult to bypass these traps without understanding the logic behind them!"

Zhang Xuan nodded his head as a frown slowly appeared on his forehead.

He had seen the complexity of the Celestial Designer Mechanical Container himself. If not for the Library of Heaven's Path, it would be impossible for him to open it.

Even a single box could be designed so intricately.

If a celestial designer had assisted with the design of the traps in this passageway, the dangers that lurked in this passageway would be unimaginable.

Puhe!

Just as Zhang Xuan was deep in thought, he heard the sound of a sharp knife tearing through flesh. Lifting his gaze, he saw Luo Zhu hurriedly retreating with a reddened face. His arm seemed to have been sliced by something, and it was bleeding profusely.

"Are you alright?"

Jin Conghai and the others hurried forward to help him stop the bleeding.

"I'm alright!" Luo Zhu shook his head. "The traps in this passageway seem to have become even more complicated than before..."

"Even more complicated? How long is this passageway? How long did you take to reach the end?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"It is around three hundred meters. The previous time I was here, I advanced bit by bit using the puppets and it took me around four days to get to the other end!"

Luo Zhu frowned, "However, it seems like these traps change every single time one enters. My previous experience clearing the traps is completely useless now..."

"Four days?" Zhang Xuan was speechless.

To travel three hundred meters in four days, this passageway was indeed difficult.

"Indeed. But there's no other way around it. The sword qi contained within the traps possess the might of at least a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle. If one were to accidentally come into contact with it, one will be torn into half in an instant!"

Luo Zhu shook his head.

"Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle sword qi?" The crowd was astonished.

When they saw the puppet being reduced to smithereens previously, they already had an idea that the sword qi emanated in the traps were fearsome. Even so, they didn't expect it to be so powerful.

Even a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert would find it difficult to survive after being struck by such powerful sword qi.

Not to mention, it would be difficult for them to dodge the attacks in such a narrow passageway.

"Do we really have no other choice other than to advance bit by bit?"

Zhao Feiwu frowned.

"That's right! The trap mechanisms left behind by celestial designers are incomparably profound, and they are ever-changing. If one doesn't know the pattern behind the changes, it'll be difficult to clear the traps." Luo Zhu shook his head.

"It won't work even if we were to destroy the mechanical system in this passageway?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Even formations, an intangible existence, could be stopped with a kick. If they could find the switch to the traps or the center of operation of the system, shouldn't it be possible to shut down the traps?

"Destroy?"

Luo Zhu smiled bitterly, "How could it be that easy? Just like a water wheel, the artifacts left behind by celestial designers are constantly on the move. Even if one had the blueprint on hand, if one doesn't comprehend the logic behind it, it will be futile. If its designs could be overcome so easily, it wouldn't be such a feared occupation!"

Mechanical systems and formations were similar in the sense that even if an amateur were to have the blueprint in hand, if they couldn't understand the workings of the system, they would still be unable to decipher it.

After all, mechanical systems were built to be continuously on the move. If one didn't understand the slightest bit of this occupation, one would be unable to get out of it alive, let alone, destroy it.

"Indeed. This is the reason why celestial designers are feared. They are capable of incorporating mechanical systems into artifacts, thus crafting tools capable of slaughtering experts easily. Furthermore, these artifacts don't need to be powered by spirit stones... If I'm not mistaken, the energy required for powering these traps comes

from the waterfall above. As such, unlike formations, compasses won't work. If one doesn't understand the logic behind the traps, one would never be able to overcome the traps!"

Hall Master Sai nodded in agreement.

Compasses were capable of determining the flow of spiritual energy to detect the weak points of a formation. However... mechanical traps weren't powered by spiritual energy but kinetic energy.

How were they supposed to decipher these traps?

Hearing the analyses of the duo, the complexion of the crowd turned gloomy. The excitement from before had vanished altogether.

Seeing that the morale is down, Zhang Xuan shook his head and said, "Even though compasses won't work, it doesn't mean that there are no other methods of deciphering the traps. Let me give it a try!"

After which, Zhang Xuan smiled faintly and gently touched the floor of the passageway with his palm.

Chapter 503

Entering the Tomb

"Be careful..."

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was touching the ground instead of studying the various logic governing the traps in the passageway, Luo Zhu felt faint-headed.

Do you really think that you can analyze the entire mechanical system just by touching the ground?

The traps designed by celestial designers were as complex and intricate as formations. There were innumerable types of mechanical system, and even for systems of the same type, there were countless variations.

Not to mention, the design of the system would also affect its operation as well.

Even a real celestial designer would have to take a long time analyzing the various properties of the mechanical system before being able to decipher it. No matter how skilled you are in the other occupations, it is impossible for you to apply the logic from those into this field.

"There's no need to panic. Allow me to rest for a moment first. After that, I'll continue testing out the traps with my puppets. Anyway, the one thing we aren't lacking is time. I've also brought sufficient water and rations so there's no need to worry!"

Seeing that the morale was down, Luo Zhu consoled with a smile.

In truth, his real occupation was a tomb raider, and he had already traversed such treacherous places innumerable times; he was used to it. However, the others were different. Having never encountered such a fearsome trap, it was natural for them to feel apprehensive.

"There's no way around it. We don't understand such traps at all so we'll be depending on you then." Jin Conghai nodded.

"Don't worry. Even though the complexity of the trap has increased, as long as I have sufficient time, I'm confident that I can still make it to the other end. You all just have to follow behind me..." Luo Zhu nodded.

Most experts or wealthy merchants would opt to hire a celestial designer to design their tombs for them, and so, he had already faced off with such traps many times throughout the years. Even though the trap had become more complicated, he didn't think that it would be a problem for him.

Confident, Luo Zhu was just about to make preparations and make another attempt when he saw that Zhang shi, who was done touching the ground, had stood up. The latter stretched his back before walking into the passageway.

"Zhang shi..."

Luo Zhu immediately narrowed his eyes in fear.

Despite having tested the area with his puppet beforehand, he was still nearly torn in half by some sword qi. Wasn't it suicidal to be charging in so recklessly?

Panicking, Luo Zhu was just about to pull Zhang shi out when the young man suddenly lifted his leg and kicked at the wall beside him.

Hong long!

An intense buzzing sound echoed throughout the cavern, and the crowd felt the ground beneath them shake.

"Alright, the traps have been disabled!"

After which, the calm voice of the young man echoed. Before the crowd could react, he began walking in with widened strides.

"The traps... have been disabled?"

Seeing how nothing was triggered despite Zhang Xuan's casual movements, Luo Zhu's expression made his frenzy apparent.

What was going on?

He had just tried it out for himself, and the trap in the passageway was clearly much stronger and complex from before. Even a person like him, who often hung out by the tombs, would find it hard to clear the entire passageway without half a month of effort. Yet, the other party managed to do it... with a single kick?

Are you for real?

This was a mechanical system designed by a celestial designer! Luo Zhu was already prepared to have several hundreds of his puppets destroyed, and yet, the other party, with a single kick...

Luo Zhu was on the verge of going mad.

He turned around to look at the crowd, only to see the others staring at him in bewilderment.

Didn't you just prattle on about how formidable this thing was? Why did Zhang shi manage to stop the entire thing with just a single kick?

"Let's go on..."

Luo Zhu felt stifled. However, given how Zhang shi was capable of even dealing with a possession, it wasn't entirely impossible for him to have comprehended the various skills of celestial designers as well. Consoling himself like that, he advanced through the passageway.

As expected, the traps in the passageway were truly disabled. Nothing was triggered as the group walked by.

Soon, reaching the very end, a vast hall appeared before them.

Upon seeing the hall, Luo Zhu said with a grim expression, "Previously, I was possessed as soon as I reached this point so I didn't dare go any further..."

Zhang Xuan scanned the hall.

Possessing a length and width of around twenty to thirty meters wide, it was reminiscent of an underground palace. At the very center of the hall were four huge ashen-green coffins. It was impossible to determine what material the coffins were made of, but they looked extremely heavy.

"Eye of Insight!"

Instead of rushing into the room, Zhang Xuan raised his eyebrows and scanned the room once more.

A moment later, he frowned.

He found that he couldn't peer into the contents of the coffin. Most probably, it was a creation beyond that of his current cultivation realm.

"I wonder if I can get any detail on the room from the ground!"

Even though the Eye of Insight was unable to provide him with any useful detail, Zhang Xuan didn't panic. Instead, he bent down and touched the ground.

Previously, recalling how he'd opened the Celestial Designer Mechanical Container, Zhang Xuan thought that since the traps operated by a mechanical system as well, it should have a flaw. Thus, he gave it a try and to his delight, it really worked.

The Library of Heaven's Path immediately reflected the name and flaws of the traps.

After looking through, Zhang Xuan came to a realization.

These traps were actually similar to formations, they had a life gate and death gate as well. Otherwise, how was anyone supposed to bypass these traps?

Not only so, there was also a core as well. As long as one found the center of operations, no matter how powerful a trap was, it could be made redundant.

After all, without energy, no matter how powerful a machine was, it would be useless.

This was the reason why Zhang Xuan could stop the entire mechanical system with a kick and lead everyone in.

Hu!

A book appeared in Zhang Xuan's mind.

"Greenash Rock, naturally formed in the depths of the ground. It is resilient..."

With just a brief glance, Zhang Xuan nearly spurted blood.

He thought that even though the Eye of Insight was ineffective, he should be able to find out something regarding the coffin or the hall via the Library of Heaven's Path. Never in his dreams did he expect for an analysis on the rock he just touched to appear instead.

'The passageway constitutes the entirety of the mechanical system, that's why information regarding the traps was reflected when I touched it. On the other hand, this is just a normal tile so it reflects exactly what I touched. This is similar to the case when I touched the bookshelf back then!'

Dismal, Zhang Xuan soon understood.

Back then, when Zhang Xuan attempted to gather all of the books on a bookshelf in a single go by touching the bookshelf, a similar occurrence happened.

It seemed like the Library of Heaven's Path classified matters by an entirety. Otherwise, it would only reflect what Zhang Xuan came into direct physical contact with.

But thinking about it, if he were able to know the condition of the entire continent just by touching the floor, that would be a little ridiculous.

Seeing the serious expression on Zhang Shi's face, Luo Zhu took the lead and explained, "There's no danger here. We can enter the hall!"

When he stepped into the hall, nothing particular occurred.

Thus, the group behind followed suit.

"These are the coffins housing the Soulless Metal Humanoids. The one that I took came from here!"

Walking up to the coffin, Luo Zhu pointed and spoke anxiously.

Back then, it was precisely when he opened the coffin and was about to take away the Soulless Metal Humanoid that he was possessed. As such, he already had a trauma regarding the matter, and thus, he didn't dare to step forward.

"Let me take a look!"

Nodding his head, Zhang Xuan walked forward.

As expected, one of the four coffins was open, and its interior was completely empty.

He touched the empty coffin.

Hu!

A book appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Grade-7 Metal Coffin, forged by 4-star Blacksmith Xu Zhe. It is used as a container to house a Soulless Metal Humanoid, and it won't decompose over time. Flaw No.1, it cannot be used to house a normal corpse..."

The introduction and flaws regarding the coffin were detailed in the book.

"Grade-7 Metal Coffin?" After reading through the details, Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

Based on the description in the Library of Heaven's Path, this coffin should only be used to store Soulless Metal Humanoids. It shouldn't contain any souls at all. If so, why would Luo Zhu have been possessed?

Thus, he turned to an unopened coffin and touched it.

It was also a Grade-7 Metal Coffin, and its purpose was the same as well—storing Soulless Metal Humanoid. There wasn't much of a difference from the first one.

Zhang Xuan went on to touch the others and they reflected the same conclusion as well.

Knowing that they were containers for Soulless Metal Humanoid, Zhang Xuan swiftly lost his interest.

The purpose of his journey was to obtain the inheritance of the soul oracles. The Soulless Metal Humanoids didn't mean much to him.

But in the end, these items were of great value. Previously, Zhang Xuan had managed to sell it for twenty thousand spirit stones. Even though he didn't need it, he could still

earn substantial wealth from their sales.

Seeing as Zhang Shi touched all four of the coffins, Luo Zhu asked anxiously, "Zhang Shi, I was possessed here... Should we open the other coffins?"

The others were also awaiting Zhang Xuan's decision.

"Don't open them first!"

Even though there were no problems reflected on the books, Zhang Xuan couldn't guarantee that no mishap would occur when the coffins were opened.

It would still be fine if a soul of the level of the one who possessed Luo Zhu previously appeared, but if a powerful were to appear instead, Zhang Xuan could not say for sure whether his Heaven's Path zhenqi would be effective on the latter.

It was better to proceed carefully.

"Put the coffins directly into the storage ring. We'll open them after we get out!" Zhang Xuan said after a moment of contemplation.

"Alright!"

Sun Qiang had been waiting for these words. He hurried forward, stretched out his hand, and swept the four giant coffins into his storage ring.

These belong to the young master. No matter who you are, don't even dream of laying your hands on them...

"Cough cough!" Seeing how shameless Sun Qiang was behaving, Zhang Xuan's face reddened. He turned around, issued some instructions, before proceeding ahead.

"You all wait here first. I'll look around the area!"

The hall had an eerie appearance, and it felt desolate.

The walls were all made of the tough Greenash Rocks. It seemed like the builder really put a lot of effort into building this hall. Not only did he excavate the entire area, he even used the toughest material to reinforce its structure, ensuring its long-term durability.

Touching the walls around the room, Zhang Xuan didn't find any traps. Thus, he advanced forward.

The hall was linked to another narrow passageway.

Walking up to it, he bent down and touched the ground.

Hu!

A book appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"It's just an ordinary passageway?"

The book recorded the details of the floor material reflected in the book, thus proving that there weren't any mechanical traps inside.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan soon came to a realization.

Such traps were expensive. It was normal for traps to be laid at the entrance for fear of invaders, but setting them up in the interiors seemed a little ridiculous. Since the purpose of those traps was to prevent anyone to entering the tomb at all, it would make more sense to spend the money on reinforcing the traps in the entrance.

He turned around and shouted, "There is no danger here, come over!"

The group hurried over.

Zhang Xuan led the way forward.

The passageway wasn't long, extending on for only a distance of ten meters or so. At the end, another vast hall appeared before them.

It was much larger than the one before.

"Based on what I know, the first chamber is for the protectors of the soul oracle, the Soulless Metal Humanoids, while the second chamber is the main chamber prepared for the soul oracle himself. This should be where the souls of the soul oracles lies..."

Luo Zhu swallowed a mouthful of saliva.

"You mean that... we'll find the souls of the soul oracles here?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Luo Zhu nodded.

"Since this is the main chamber... I believe so!"

Upon hearing the other party's confirmation, Zhang Xuan raised his head, and with a glance, a deep frown suddenly appeared on his face.

"Th-this... What is going on?"

Chapter 504

Second Acknowledgement of the Heavens

Instead of a hall, what that appeared before them was a field of flora and fauna. A refreshing fragrance tickled their nose, and in the skies, they saw white clouds floating by. It was as though they had returned back to the mountains.

"Could this be an... Illusion Formation?"

Hall Master Sai and the others were taken aback.

How could there be plants growing in an underground chamber? Not to mention, white clouds and blue skies. Clearly, it was an illusion.

The only explanation for this bizarre sight was that it was an Illusion Formation.

"This isn't a formation..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

As a formation master, he would surely be able to tell if it was one. However, there wasn't the slightest disturbance in the spiritual energy before him, and the sight before him felt incomparably real. It was as though one was traversing through space, and it felt indescribably bizarre.

"Is this a mechanical trap? No, that can't be. Mechanical traps aren't capable of producing such effects!"

In the end, mechanical traps operated based on logic. They weren't capable of producing these flora, fauna, and flowing water before them.

"Let me test the situation out with a puppet!"

Perplexed, Luo Zhu flicked his wrist and a puppet appeared. Then, the puppet slowly walked toward the field at the end of the passageway.

Hu!

As soon as it stepped out of the passageway, it immediately disappeared without a trace.

"This... What happened?"

Everyone leaped back in shock.

How could the puppet simply disappear all of the sudden? Even if a mechanical trap was activated, at least the fragments of the puppets should remain. To disappear as soon as it walked toward the end of the passageway... This was way too bizarre!"

"Could this be a... Teleportation Formation?"

Hall Master Sai's throat went dry.

Everyone turned to look at him doubtfully.

"The Teleportation Formation of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance is only capable of transferring words and information, and they are known as Communication Walls!"

Hall Master Sai said, with a trembling voice, "It's said that at grade-6, Teleportation Formation will gain the ability to transfer material objects such as food, money, equipment, and even artifacts. At grade-8, even lifeforms can be transported... In other words, even a human can leap through space."

"Transporting a human?" The crowd was astonished.

Zhang Xuan also widened his eyes in shock.

As a 4-star formation master, he had a deeper understanding of formations than Hall Master Sai. He thought that transporting information should already be the limit. To think that formations would be able to transport even a human.

How deep of an understanding of space must one possess to be capable of setting up a formation capable of transporting humans!

Given how the puppet abruptly disappeared... Could this really be a formation of that level?

If so, it was normal that they couldn't see or feel the puppet anymore.

As an Upper Nine Paths occupation, formation masters had a high requisite on one's cultivation. If one's cultivation didn't reach the required level, one would be disallowed from studying more profound knowledge. It was just like how even though Zhang Xuan was able to inscribe a grade-5 formation plate, he was only considered a quasi 4-star formation master.

A person who was capable of setting up a grade-8 formation definitely possessed cultivation beyond that of a Transcendent Mortal... To be able to get such a figure to set up a formation for him, how powerful must the owner of the tomb be?

Since Zhang Xuan was able to come to this conclusion, the others also realized the same as well. Their faces immediately paled.

If it was just a Transcendent Mortal 3-dan or 4-dan soul oracle, even if they were possessed, they would still possess a certain degree of self-preservation means. However, if the opponent they met were to be beyond that level, they wouldn't stand a chance at all.

"Zhang shi... Do we enter?"

The crowd turned to look at Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan fell into deep contemplation.

If his conjecture was right, proceeding ahead would definitely put them in grave danger. He wasn't confident of holding his ground even with the Heaven's Path zhenqi.

It could be said that certain doom awaited them if they were to proceed forward.

But if they backed down now... How much longer would it take for Lu Chong to recover?

"For me, he was willing to even risk his life. What do I have to fear?"

Recalling how that young man stepped in front of him calmly to protect him, determination gleamed in Zhang Xuan's eyes.

Lu Chong was willing to give up his life for him.

As the other party's senior, if he were to back down in the face of danger, what rights

did he have to be considered as the other party's teacher?

Flinging his hands back, Zhang Xuan instructed, "You all wait here, I'll go in alone... If I don't return in four hours, I'll have to trouble Hall Master Sai and Zhao gongzi to help my students and Sun Qiang get out!"

"Teacher, I'm not leaving! I want to follow you!" Zhao Ya stepped forward.

"We share the same thoughts! We'll follow you no matter where you go!"

Yuan Tao and the others declared resolutely.

If not for Zhang laoshi, they would still be ordinary students in Tianxuan Kingdom. However, at this moment, every single one of them was a Zhizun realm expert, each possessing the strength to lift a mountain.

Since their teacher was willing to put himself with danger to save Lu Chong, how could they, as his students, back down?

Zhang Xuan felt a surge of warmth. However, the situation before him was too bizarre. It was too dangerous to bring them over. After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan shook his head and his complexion darkened, "Are you all going to disobey my orders? Stay here!"

"Teacher, we implore you to not chase us away. How can we possibly watch by the side as you put yourself into danger? Even if we were to survive this ordeal, we'd definitely be plagued by guilt in the future!" Zhao Ya spoke resolutely.

"Teacher, please don't chase us away! Even if it means disobeying your words, I'll go with you!" Wang Ying said.

She was usually the most indecisive one of the group, and yet, at this moment, the determination in her eyes was unwavering.

Knowing that his students weren't able to simply watch on by the side as he ventured through danger, Zhang Xuan eventually nodded his head after a long moment of contemplation. "Since you all have made up your minds, let's go together then!"

"The teacher for the students, and the students for the teacher. This is what a true relationship between a teacher and student should be!"

Watching this sight, Zhao Feiwu and the others felt touched.

Previously, they had been wondering why a person of Zhang Shi's capability would choose to bring around a bunch of young and weak students along with him. However, at this moment, they realized that the relationship of a teacher and a student transcended far beyond the impartation of knowledge.

A teacher could brave through danger for their students, whereas a student could remain unmoved before danger for their teacher.

It was this self-sacrificial spirit that made the relationship between the two so noble!

Hong long!

At that moment, a powerful aura suddenly descended from the skies. A unique energy began gathering in the world. It was neither spiritual energy nor Origin Energy, but with a single whiff, one could feel their analytical ability growing stronger and their thought process becoming clearer.

This energy swiftly gathered around Zhang Xuan as though a torrent, refining his presence and disposition.

Narrowing her eyes, Zhao Feiwu suddenly thought of something and her lips trembled in disbelief.

"It's... Celestial Master Teacher!"

Jin Conghai was also taken aback.

"Celestial Master Teacher? H-how... is that possible?"

Celestial Master Teacher meant that even the heavens were acknowledging one's identity as a master teacher. Even if one didn't undergo the various examinations of the master teachers, one could still be acknowledged by the masses. Despite the long history of the continent, only Kong Shi had ever succeeded in being acknowledged by the heavens. To think that this Zhang Shi would manage to achieve the same as well...

Could this really be true?

"Indeed, it's really Celestial Master Teacher... Furthermore, it doesn't seem to be just

2-star!"

Hall Master Sai's face flushed red.

As the head of the only Appraiser Hall in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, as well as a 4-star pinnacle appraiser, he had met with a lot of master teachers. However, he had never heard of a single one being acknowledged by the heavens.

The other party had said that he was a 2-star master teacher so even if the heavens were to acknowledge him, he should only be a 3-star Celestial Master Teacher at maximum. However, the overwhelming energy before him actually made him feel like submitting to the other party.

Without a doubt, the other party wasn't just a 2-star or 3-star master teacher. However, as for his exact rank, Hall Master Sai wasn't a master teacher and he had never seen a Celestial Master Teacher before so he couldn't make a clear gauge.

But regardless of his rank, to be acknowledged by the heavens itself was already sufficient to send a ripple of shock through the world.

"This..."

Contrary to the shock the others were going through, the current Zhang Xuan was a little dumbstruck.

Previously, when he agreed to Zhao Ya and the others' request, he actually wasn't too keen on doing so. However, considering that his students would never grow up if he were to protect them tightly beneath his wings, he decided to let go.

It was just like a seedling. If one were to use a wall to shield it from rain and storm, it would never grow tall.

Thus, he reluctantly agreed to it. However, he didn't expect this to induce another Celestial Master Teacher acknowledgement.

He had undergone such a situation before so even though the inflow of the energy made him a little dizzy, he knew that this was a good chance for him to raise his strength.

Thus, without any hesitation, he immediately sat down on the ground and focused his

attention into absorbing the unique energy shrouding him.

Hong long!

With the inflow of this strength, his Soul Depth raised swiftly. His thought process gradually became swifter and clearer.

...

A meeting was taking place in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance's Master Teacher Pavilion.

"We are the hosts for the Master Teacher Tournament this time around. Make some preparations, we have to at least get a good placing..."

Seated at the center seat, Pavilion Master Kang surveyed the group before him.

Those within the room were all elders of the Master Teacher Pavilion. Su Fan and Ling Yuheng were also within the group.

The location for the Master Teacher Tournament wasn't fixed. The twenty-seven powers would take turns hosting the event, and it only happened that Myriad Kingdom City would be playing host this time around.

This time, they were going to be battling on their home ground. It would be truly embarrassing if their results were as poor as before.

"Yes!" The crowd nodded their heads.

"This time, our elders have nominated a total of six candidates. I have looked through the information you all have submitted and they are indeed young talents. However, there are only two slots for this tournament so a round of selection will have to be conducted..."

Pavilion Master Kang continued. However, before he could finish his words, his body suddenly froze.

The other elders also noticed something and they narrowed their eyes. They quickly turned their sights toward a single direction.

"Trembling of Myriad Tokens, Harmony of the Chimes... This is acknowledgement of

a Celestial Master Teacher?"

After a long period of time, Pavilion Master Kang finally managed to utter with a hoarse voice.

"Even though it's an acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher and it has occurred in our guild... given how the remarkable geniuses of the other powers are gathered in Myriad Kingdom City at the moment, there is a possibility that one of them might be the one who triggered it!"

"Indeed. If they were to be acknowledged by the heavens in Myriad Kingdom City, the phenomenon would appear in our guild... Hurry up and find out which geniuses are in the city at the moment..."

"It seems like... the champion of this tournament will surely be that person!"

...

The faces of the elders paled, and they muttered to themselves.

Celestial Master Teacher was an existence acknowledged by the heavens itself. In the entire continent, only Kong shi had managed to achieve this feat. Regardless of which power the Celestial Master Teacher came from, there was no doubt that... he would be the champion in the Master Teacher Tournament!

"Could it be... him?"

Different from the reaction of the other elders, Su shi and Ling shi glanced at one another and a figure suddenly appeared in their mind.

But soon, they shook their heads.

He had just completed by 2-star master teacher examination, and he hadn't even reached Zhizun realm yet. How could he possibly be acknowledged by the heavens?

Thus... it couldn't be him!

Chapter 505

Oasis of the Mirage Deity

After a long period of time, Zhang Xuan finally finished absorbing the energy in his surroundings and stood up.

As expected of Celestial Master Teacher. Even though his cultivation realm remained the same, at the Prolonged Longevity realm pinnacle, his comprehension of cultivation and battle techniques had deepened.

With just this, his fighting prowess could be said to have raised by at least twofold.

If he could fight equally with a Transcendent Mortal 2-dan intermediate stage previously, he would be able to match up with an advanced stage expert now.

At the same time, his Soul Depth had also raised from 12.1 to 14.1.

Even though an increase of 2.0 was humble as compared to the effects of the Book of Heaven's Path, if he were to cultivate normally, this leap would require at least decades of effort.

In other words, this acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher had saved him at least decades of training for his Soul Depth!

Fearsome!

Also, his Eye of Insight and Impartation of Heaven's Will had also grown stronger. Using the Eye of Insight, he could now peer through existences two small cultivation tiers above him.

Meaning, he could easily see through the flaws of an Origin Energy realm intermediate stage cultivator already.

As for Impartation of Heaven's Will, his ability to induce trust in others had grown, and others would find it hard to refute his words.

He had to expend his Soul Depth to coax Song Chao previously but now, as long as he were to utilize the Impartation of Heaven's Will, the other party would feel inclined to trust his words automatically.

More importantly, by earning the acknowledge of the heavens, his Will of Mind had also progressed significantly in the Lucid Analytical realm.

As expected of Celestial Master Teacher. Its effects were truly immense to a master teacher.

"Even though there was no change in my cultivation, I can feel that I'm not too far from making a breakthrough!"

With a deeper understanding of cultivation, it wasn't too difficult for him to bypass the barriers to reaching Origin Energy realm.

After all, he had studied a few hundred Origin Energy realm secret manuals. Even though he hadn't compiled a flawless version of Heaven's Path Divine Art yet, he had a clear idea on the direction of his cultivation. As long as he had sufficient spirit stones, making a breakthrough wasn't too difficult.

"I should try to look at the field of grass before me once more with the Eye of Insight!"

Thinking that he might be see something new with his improved Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan lifted his gaze.

"It isn't a formation or a mechanical trap!"

There was a huge disparity between what he could see before and what he was seeing now. The previous obscurity had become crystal clear to Zhang Xuan's eyes.

"Did Zhang shi notice something?"

The crowd turned their gazes over.

They had never seen a Celestial Master Teacher before, but as a legend of the Master Teacher Pavilion, they knew that it was anything but ordinary.

"It is a method used by soul oracles to beguile souls. In other words, what you all are seeing is fake, a mirage!" said Zhang Xuan, frowning.

"But if it's a mirage, why did the puppet suddenly disappear?" Luo Zhu found the matter hard to believe.

At most, a mirage should only be able to confuse one. This explanation couldn't account for the disappearance of the puppet.

The puppet had disappeared right after walking through the passageway. It was clear that some powerful formation had transported it away.

"Soul oracles have the ability to beguile all lifeforms possessing souls. They can make us all see the same image, and thus, inducing us to believe that what that lay before us is real. However... puppets are different. Puppets have no soul and consciousness, and as such, they can't be beguiled... Thus, it's not that the puppet disappeared but that it has stepped through the passageway. Since it is unable to enter the mirage, naturally, we can't see it," Zhang Xuan explained.

Soul oracles could beguile lifeforms possessing souls and muddle their ability to distinguish truth from false. However, puppets were different. Possessing no consciousness, they couldn't be beguiled and naturally, they would step right through the mirage.

"If it's true... then could this be the soul oracle's... [Oasis of the Mirage Deity]?"

Suddenly recalling something, Luo Zhu's face paled and he nearly fell to the ground.

"Oasis of the Mirage Deity?"

Everyone was baffled. Even the knowledgeable Hall Master Sai was confused.

"Oasis of the Mirage Deity is a skill unique to soul oracles. They are capable of using their soul energy to create an incomparably realistic sight that subconsciously draws one in, similar to the oasis in the desert. The moment one steps into the mirage, one's soul will be forcefully torn from one's body and come under the control of the soul oracle..."

Luo Zhu trembled as he explained.

"One's soul will be forcefully torn from one's body?"

Everyone was shocked.

The greatest weakness of the soul oracles was their physical body. Once one lost this advantage over them, wouldn't one be powerless to their whims?

"Indeed. If we had entered just now, our souls would be torn from our body. Even if we managed to survive... We would be as good as dead!"

Cold sweat seeped down Luo Zhu's head.

The faces of the others also paled.

It was fortunate that they didn't charge ahead upon realizing the peculiarity of the matter. If they had really rushed over, they would have died for nothing.

As expected of a soul oracle. Even their means were hard to guard against.

"Just that... one has to be at least 6-star to be capable of utilizing the Oasis of the Mirage Deity. Could this be... the tomb of a 6-star soul oracle?" Luo Zhu asked doubtfully.

Oasis of the Mirage Deity wasn't a skill that just any soul oracle could utilize. Only upon reaching 6-star would one be able to set it up.

Just like master teachers and other Upper Nine Paths occupation, the techniques of the soul oracles also had a requisite on one's cultivation... As such, the ranking of a soul oracle was also linked to his cultivation realm.

A 6-star soul oracle would possess a cultivation realm at the zenith of the Transcendent Mortal realm!

Even if it was lacking a physical body, it wasn't an opponent that they could face.

"I think that it would be best if we leave right now!" Hall Master Sai's eyebrows leaped in unease.

Even though he was interested in seeing the tomb of a soul oracle and view the various artifacts contained within... he didn't have the courage to disturb the tomb of a former 6-star soul oracle.

Jin Conghai clenched his fists tightly and said, "Indeed. It's best for us to not get involved with an expert of this level..."

The more knowledgeable one was, the more one understood one's own ignorance. Similarly, the higher one's cultivation realm was, the more they understood how powerful the top-notch experts were.

Understanding the irreconcilable gap between them and a person who once stood at the zenith of Transcendent Mortals, they didn't dare to proceed any further.

They knew that with their force, they would never be able to deal with a 6-star soul oracle, no matter how many years he had been dead for.

"Leave? That's a good idea..."

Lifting his head, Zhang Xuan smiled bitterly, "But it's already too late..."

"Hee hee hee!"

At that moment, everyone suddenly felt a chill and a sinister laughter echoed in the passageway.

"To think that my Oasis of the Mirage Deity would be seen through so easily. Not bad, it seems that quite a few bodies have come this time!"

The voice was bizarrely shrill, and it seemed to echo straight within the depths of one's soul, leaving one feeling unnerved.

Huala!

In an instant, the flowers, clouds, and blue sky before them disappeared, and a huge, empty hall appeared in its place.

In the large hall, there was only a single coffin placed at a distance forty to fifty meters away from the crowd. It was hard to tell how large it was from this distance, but from the looks of it, it was significantly bigger and heavier than the other four coffins in the first chamber.

"You wish to possess us?" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

Entering the Lucid Analytical realm, Zhang Xuan felt no anxiety, fear, or any negative emotions.

"After such a long sleep, since someone dared to stumble into my tomb, of course I should claim their bodies for my own use!" The voice chuckled.

As the other party spoke, Zhang Xuan scanned his surroundings with his Eye of Insight

Regardless of how powerful the other party was, he had already been dead for innumerable years. Given how he would rather resort to using a mirage than deal with them personally, it could only mean that... he wasn't as powerful as they thought he was.

As long as Zhang Xuan found his hiding spot, there might be a chance to turn the situation around.

However, to his disappointment, he couldn't find any trace of the other party at all.

"Don't waste your effort. If I don't want to appear, do you think that you can find me with your mediocre skills?" Seemingly noticing Zhang Xuan's intentions, the voice sounded once more.

Zhang Xuan fell silent.

The voice was transmitted straight into their soul, making it impossible to trace him via sound. It would indeed be difficult to find him so long as he wished to remain hidden.

Turning around to glance at Jin Conghai and Hall Master Sai, the duo also shook their heads.

It seemed like the two of them had the same idea in mind as well.

Just as Zhang Xuan was racking his brain for a solution, Jin Conghai's voice sounded.

"Zhang shi, I'll try to stall for time. You should take the chance to leave with gongzi and the others!"

Turning his head, he saw that Jin Conghai's eyes were filled with the determination of a soldier ready to meet his demise.

"You have an idea in mind?" Zhang Xuan sent a telepathic message.

"I don't. However, I do have a few poisons that work on souls so it might be effective against him!" Jin Conghai replied grimly.

The effects on poison weren't just limited to the physical body. Some of the more formidable poison could dissipate souls as well.

Taking Zhang Xuan's Innate Fetal Poison for example, it was planted in him while he was still a fetus. Given the nearly absolute nature of the poison, it was, in a sense, more fearsome than a soul-dissipating poison.

"You wish to poison me? Hahaha, you should try to find me first!"

In the midst of the discussion of the duo, the voice sounded once more.

"You can listen to telepathic messages?" Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in astonishment.

They had communicated previously using telepathy, and only the two of them should know of the content of their words. Even Hall Master Sai, who was standing by the side, was completely oblivious to their interaction. Yet, this fellow actually could tell that Jin Conghai intended to poison him...

That was way too fearsome!

"Hah, it isn't just your telepathic message. Via your souls, I can even tell what you all are thinking!"

Harrumphing coldly, the voice continued, "I advise you all not to make any futile struggles. Even though there is no danger lying in wait in the passageway, it can be locked down. While you all were beguiled by the Oasis of the Mirage Deity, I locked down the area. It's too late for you to be thinking of leaving!"

Hearing those words, everyone turned their heads around and their faces immediately paled.

Just as the other party had said, the passageway behind had been sealed tightly by a stone wall.

"Let me give it a try!"

With an awful complexion, Jin Conghai gathered his strength and struck the stone wall heavily.

Hong long!

There was a massive tremor. However, the stone wall seemed to have been protected by something powerful. Even the strength of a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan was unable to move it, needless to say, shatter it.

"Let me give it a try as well!"

Stepping forward, Hall Master Sai took out a saber and slashed the stone wall several times. However, just like Jin Conghai, he didn't leave the slightest damage on the wall.

"This is the [Dragon Severing Lock] set up by a 6-star celestial designer. Only those who harness the strength of a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan cultivator can break it. You only have two fates before you. You will either meet your death here, or you will end up serving as my body..."

The voice chuckled.

"Dragon Severing Lock?"

Everyone's complexion became extremely awful.

Advancing and retreating weren't an option for them. Were they really going to... die like that?

Chapter 506

Let Me Start with a Thousand Books

"The Dragon Severing Lock is usually the final line of defense used for a fortress. It's designed such that one would be unable to break it unless one's cultivation reaches the required level... Even the celestial designer who set up the trap himself would find it hard to open it!"

Hall Master Sai's complexion darkened.

This was the final resort of celestial designers, similar to how a cultivator self-destructs when forced into a corner. Unless the circumstances were dire, no one would go to such an extent. Usually, it was only to block out one's enemies or to die along with one's nemesis that such a trap would be activated.

The moment it fell, there was no way to undo it. Even dragons would be unable to enter, thus the name 'Dragon Severing'.

Unless one's strength surpassed the tolerance limit of the wall, one wouldn't be able to break it. In this case, it was Transcendent Mortal 9-dan.

Otherwise, it was futile.

"Then... Doesn't that mean that we can't leave?"

Even the strongest of them was only a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan. Under such circumstances, wouldn't they be locked down forever?

If they couldn't even break the wall, how could they leave the area?

"Let me take a look!"

Frowning, Zhang Xuan walked up to the stone door, touched it with his finger, and a book appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Grade-6 Dragon Severing Lock, designed and crafted by 6-star Celestial Designer Hu

Yangzi. It is crafted from a unique material, making it extremely resilient. Flaws No. 1: The crafting method..."

After reading through the book, Zhang Xuan's face turned extremely awful.

Even though Dragon Severing Lock had its flaws, it wasn't something that someone of his level of strength could exploit.

In other words... what the other party said was true. No one of strength below Transcendent Mortal 9-dan could break this wall.

What should he do?

Were they really going to be trapped here until their death?

Just as Zhang Xuan was ransacking his mind for a solution, Zhao Feiwu's voice echoed, "There's no need to worry. Since he intends to possess one of us, there must be another escape route. Otherwise, how does he intend to get out?"

"This..."

"That's right!"

Everyone was stunned for a moment before their eyes lit up.

Since this fellow was going to possess one of them, he must have an escape route ready for himself. After all, how could he plunge himself into this kind of desperate situation?

"We can find a way to leave after we deal with this fellow. Our most imminent danger isn't regarding our confinement!" Zhang Xuan said.

Even if they couldn't get out, the rations in their storage rings were sufficient to sustain everyone here for several years. Factoring in the spirit stones they had on top of that, it should be impossible for them to die out of natural causes within the short term.

Currently, the greatest threat they were facing was the owner of the tomb. If they didn't find and eradicate the hidden soul oracle, they would surely be unable to get out of here alive.

Hearing Zhang Xuan's words, the voice harrumphed coldly.

"Deal with me? Are you sure you have the capability to do so?"

"Regardless of whether we do or not, we still have to give it a try!" Stepping forward, Jin Conghai flicked his wrist and took out a jade bottle. Then, he carefully surveyed the surroundings, as though trying to find the other party's location.

"Give it a try? Let me show you how laughable that idea is then!"

Wu!

After that, a ray of light suddenly shot across the hall. Before Jin Conghai could react, he was struck squarely on his chest.

Pu!

He flew all the way back and crashed heavily against the wall. Huge mouthfuls of blood gushed from him.

"Elder Jin!"

Not expecting that the strongest member, Jin Conghai, would be defeated in a single move, everyone clenched their fists tightly.

To be capable of subduing a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan in an instant, even if the other party wasn't a 6-star soul oracle, he still wasn't someone that they could deal with.

Even though Jin Conghai was injured, Zhang Xuan didn't panic. Rather, he made use of this opportunity to quickly glance at the direction where the light appeared from.

Weng!

A book appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path. Zhang Xuan hurriedly flipped it open and read through it.

"It's an attack from a mechanical trap?"

Zhang Xuan frowned.

The previous attack didn't come from the soul oracle but a mechanical trap.

In other words... It was impossible for him to locate the other party from the previous attack.

"It's impossible for the soul oracle to show any opening that would betray his location. Otherwise, we would be able to guard against him and hinder his possession!"

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan's action, Luo Zhu immediately sent a telepathic message over.

"That's true!" Zhang Xuan nodded his agreement.

When a soul oracle possessed the body of another, they would enter via one's acupoints. If one were to seal the acupoint in advance and repel the soul oracle, it would become extremely difficult for the soul oracle to succeed.

After all, what the soul oracle was doing was expelling the original soul of the body and forcefully fusing their soul with the body. If the original owner were to struggle violently, it might cause irreparable damage to the body. If so, it would be meaningless even if the soul oracle successfully possessed the body.

This was the reason why that fellow would not allow himself to be noticed until he struck.

Besides, it was also possible that a member of the group might have some specialized equipment to deal with souls. This would put him at risk.

"Don't even think of finding me. It's impossible for you all to kill me; you're all still too weak!"

Hearing the telepathic conversation between the duo, the voice continued haughtily, "Since you have entered my tomb, you should have been prepared to be possessed. However... I can only possess one of you so... the rest will be safe."

"Safe? Hah, like it would be that simple!" Hall Master Sai harrumphed.

Given how the other party locked all of them in this chamber, how could it be so simple?

He didn't believe that the other fellow would allow any of them to leave after

successfully possessing one body.

After all, soul oracles were a forbidden existence. If news that one had possessed the body of another were to get out, that person would surely be pursued to the ends of the world.

"By safe, I meant that you won't have to die for the time being. As for how long you can live for, it'll depend on your choice!"

The voice chuckled.

"Choice?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

The voice said, "Indeed. I'll give you all two choices now. I have a total of three trials here. If you can clear the trials, I will consider sparing you. However, you still won't be allowed to leave. I will leave you here to do whatever you need to survive!"

"Trial?" Everyone was taken aback.

Wasn't this fellow going to possess them? What in the world were the trials for then?

Zhang Xuan was also perplexed.

Usually, trials would only be prepared for the various examinations for master teachers and the other unique occupations. Given how powerful the other party was, killing them should be a walk in the park. What was the point of going through so much trouble?

However, given that they were stuck now and that the other party had control over the mechanical traps, their life and death were in the hands of the other party. No matter how bewildered they were, they weren't in the position to reject the other party's conditions.

"What about the alternative option?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"The other option is that I'll kill you all one by one until someone is willing to challenge the trial!" The voice harrumphed.

Not expecting the second condition to be about the trial as well, the crowd felt even more baffled.

What was this fellow's motive for insisting for them to challenge the trial?

"Could this be... selection of the reception lamb?" Luo Zhu suddenly asked.

"Selection of the reception lamb?" Zhang Xuan's mouth twitched.

Selection of the reception lamb was a term commonly used by herders.

Usually, when a guest visited, a herder would slaughter a lamb to welcome him. However, how to choose the most suitable lamb to welcome the guest warmly was a problem.

Thus, they would allow the lamb to run on the fields. The one that ran the fastest and most happily would surely have the best meat texture.

Could the soul oracle be intending to do the same as well? Through the trials, he would choose the one possessing the most suitable physical constitution to possess. This way, his soul could better fuse with the body and the decline of his cultivation would be minimized.

"That's very possible!"

Contemplating over the issue for a moment, Zhang Xuan nodded his head in agreement.

There was a high possibility that this was the case.

Which body to possess was also an important choice for a soul oracle as well. Taking that soul which possessed Luo Zhu previously, not only did his cultivation plummet, it would also be very difficult for him to successfully fuse with the body.

Even if he were to succeed, due to the incompatible constitution, his future achievements would have been limited as well.

Making an analogy, it was just like forcing a person adept in swordsmanship to use a hammer instead.

No matter how good a physical body was, as long as it was incompatible, one would be unable to bring out its full strength.

It was highly possible that that fellow was harboring such thoughts when asking them to challenge the trials. Through the selection, he would find the most suitable constitution for him to possess.

Otherwise, how could an ancient soul be so bored as to seal the chamber using the Dragon Severing Lock just to fool around with them?

Most probably, he had already decided on this from the moment the group entered the tomb. The main reason why he didn't make any move earlier was to wait until they entered this passageway so as to seal their escape route. Only then did he finally reveal his existence.

"That's right, I'm indeed choosing the finest lamb among you lot... Why, are you afraid?" Hearing their conversation, the voice sounded once more.

"Afraid? Why would we be?"

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan said. "Where is your trial? Bring it out so that we can take a look!"

"That's more like it!"

Seeing Zhang Xuan agree to the matter, the voice sounded a little pleased. "Don't think that I won't lay my eyes on you just because you failed the trial! My selection criterion is your constitution, not the speed and means you use to clear the trial! Remember this, only those who pass the trial will not be killed. Those who fail... regretfully, you'll have to bid everyone else farewell!"

Hong long!

The ground tremored and a massive stone tablet appeared in the center of the hall.

"This is the most basic 'Soul Guiding Formula' of the soul oracles. Study it, and within ten days, you must be able to draw your soul out of your body to clear the trial. Otherwise, the traps will eliminate you immediately!"

The voice instructed impassively.

"Soul Guiding Formula?"

Looking at the stone tablet, Zhang Xuan saw a dense congregation of words on it. The three large words inscribed at the very top seemed to pierce straight into one's soul, jolting one's consciousness.

Soul Guiding Formula!

The cultivation technique of soul oracles!

To think that the first trial would be learning a cultivation technique.

"It seems like this fellow is trying to find one with a constitution compatible with the arts of soul oracles!" Zhang Xuan came to a realization. "Indeed, being capable of executing the Soul Guiding Formula would mean that one is compatible with the arts of soul oracle. Possessing a body with such constitution, the other party would be able to resume his cultivation and return to his pinnacle state!"

One who was adept at swordsmanship would naturally wish to possess a swordmaster. With a constitution suited for sword arts, it would be easier for him to relearn his techniques.

As a soul oracle, the other party definitely wished to find someone capable of learning soul oracle cultivation techniques. It would be much easier for him to cultivate this way.

"Don't bother trying your luck and waiting until the last day before drawing your soul out. It is completely pointless. Whether one has talent in soul oracle arts doesn't depend on how fast one grasps the Soul Guiding Method. Besides... once you start learning the Soul Guiding Method, you won't have a choice in the matter..."

Afraid that the group wouldn't put their effort into learning the Soul Guiding Method, the voice added.

However, before he could finish his words, the impassive voice of a young man voice said, "This Soul Guiding Method seems not bad... Do you have any other similar cultivation techniques to this? The more there are, the better... Why don't you bring out a thousand books for me to browse through first?"

The voice was taken aback. "A thousand books?"

Chapter 507

Heaven's Path Soul Art

Not only was the voice stumped, even Hall Master Sai and the others were stunned, and they nearly spurted blood.

Bring out a thousand books for you to browse through first...

Why did it feel less like a trial and more like ordering dishes in a restaurant instead?

I don't know whether the food will be delicious or not so I'll take a serving first...

"The Soul Guiding Formula is the foundation art of soul oracles. There is only one formula and cultivation technique manual!"

After a moment of silence, the soul oracle hiding in the darkness finally harrumphed coldly.

"It is the only one?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"That's right. All soul oracles cultivate via this method, there are no other alternatives!"

After which, the voice continued, "Begin cultivating now. You will only be considered to have cleared the trial if you draw out your soul within ten days!"

"Alright!"

Knowing that there should be no other traps involved since the other party was conducting a trial, the group walked out from the passageway toward the stone tablet.

Zhang Xuan had no idea who inscribed the tablet, but it had a bizarre beauty to it. Just by looking at the characters, one would feel tranquil.

"He's probably really a 6-star soul oracle!"

This was already equivalent to a fifth level painting. Most probably, the soul oracle who inscribed the stone tablet had a deep understanding into the study of souls. There was a high chance that what Luo Zhu said was true—the fellow who was speaking to them from the dark was a 6-star soul oracle.

He lightly brushed his finger over the stone tablet.

Hu!

A corresponding book appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Soul Guiding Formula, the foundation art of soul oracles. Created by the first soul oracle, Liu Mozi, it can separate one's soul from one's physical body. Flaws:..."

Written on the first page was an introduction to the Soul Guiding Formula, followed by the flaws.

"There's only ten flaws, that's not too bad."

Casually flipping through it, Zhang Xuan realized that there were only ten flaws in the cultivation technique.

Most of the cultivation techniques that Zhang Xuan seen before had from a few hundred to more than a thousand flaws. This showed that throughout the course of the inheritance of the Soul Guiding Formula, it had been refined continuously and it was gradually approaching perfection.

It was no wonder that this fellow said there was only a set of foundation formula. It was already incredible that there could be such a cultivation technique like this that was so close to perfection. For a second one like this to appear was nearly impossible.

There was only a single Heaven's Path, and the fewer mistakes there were, the closer one was to the truth. It was hard to find another one different from it.

"Let me see what flaws are there first!"

Zhang Xuan lowered his head to take a look.

"No. 1, upon successfully mastering the formula, one's cultivation will be conjoined onto one's soul, turning one's physical body into an empty shell. On top of that, the

compatibility between one's soul and body will deteriorate. Even though one will look no different from a normal person, one would be actually driving the body using one's soul..."

After reading the first flaw, Zhang Xuan's complexion turned awful.

Going by what was said above, if he were to successfully draw his soul out, it would be equivalent to tearing his soul and body apart. Even if he were to continue driving his own body, it would be, in truth, no different from driving a puppet. Other than the soul oracle cultivation technique, he would be unable to cultivate any other normal cultivation technique.

It was just like driving a car. After mastering the Soul Guiding Technique, one's physical body would become the car whereas one's soul would become the driver. No matter how good one's driving skill was... it was impossible to reach the same level of control as moving one's own body.

In other words, once he successfully draws out his soul, it would be equivalent to giving up on his own physical body and his past cultivation.

In the future, even if he could live on for an eternity through possessing others, he would also become an unnatural being that had to live in the shadows...

Zhang Xuan was originally thinking of learning the techniques of the occupation but after reading that first flaw, he immediately lost his interest.

Browsing on.

Soon, he finished looking through all ten of the flaws and gained a perfect understanding of the Soul Guiding Formula.

"If I cultivate according to this formula and succeed, I'll become a monster. But if I don't, there's a high chance I might be killed by that fellow..."

Zhang Xuan frowned

Previously, as he didn't understand soul oracles, he didn't think much of them. However, after knowing that the cultivation method was filled with such fatal flaws, he couldn't bring himself to do it.

Putting aside how his Heaven's Path Divine Art was paralleled and he would stand the top of the world as long as he cultivates accordingly, just the fact that his soul and body would be separate entities, making him no different from a monster, was already something he wished not.

Besides, he was afflicted with the Innate Fetal Poison. As long as he didn't reach the level of a 9-star master teacher by thirty, even if he were to become just a soul, he would still die.

The Innate Fetal Poison was something that even Kong shi was unable to find a solution for. If becoming a soul oracle could really fix that problem, the latter wouldn't have had to go to the extent of diving into the deep oceans, stepping onto the treacherous plains, and entering into underground chambers, putting himself in so much danger just to raise his cultivation swiftly.

"This technique shouldn't be cultivated, but I don't have a choice right now..."

The person hiding in the dark was at least a 6-star soul oracle, a being far beyond their means. Besides... Even if they had sufficient strength to deal with him, the other party could still easily kill them via the mechanical traps installed all around the hall.

If he cultivated the Soul Guiding Formula, it would be impossible for him to remain as a master teacher and by thirty-year-old, the Innate Fetal Poison would take effect and he would die.

But if he didn't cultivate, he would be killed by the other party.

It was certain doom regardless of whether he did it or not.

He felt so frustrated that his head was aching.

"Hm? If I find a way to improve the Soul Guiding Formula so that the soul and body and separate and fuse back perfectly together, won't the problem be solved?"

After contemplating for a moment, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up and a thought popped into his head.

There were flaws in this Soul Guiding Art but as long as he filled up the gaps and created a perfect Heaven's Path cultivation technique, wouldn't he be able to cultivate it without incurring such problems?

Heaven's Path cultivation techniques were perfect. As long as he could compile one out, he wouldn't face the problem of an incompatibility between his soul and body after drawing his soul out.

"But where can I find additional soul oracle cultivation techniques to make up for those flaws?"

Zhang Xuan frowned.

Soul oracle cultivation techniques were mainly centered around 'will' and 'soul'. The cultivation technique manuals that Zhang Xuan had collected before were all revolving around 'physical body' and 'zhenqi'. They were both very different things, and he wouldn't be able to form a Heaven's Path cultivation technique even if he were to put it together.

Only by finding more soul oracle cultivation techniques would he be able to perfect the Soul Guiding Formula.

But... the lineage of the soul oracles had already disappeared for innumerable years, and the fellow hiding in the dark didn't have any more of such manuals.

Just as Zhang Xuan was in dilemma, a thought suddenly struck him and he slapped his forehead.

"Hm? Why do I have to look for soul oracle cultivation techniques? Actually, wouldn't cultivation techniques that are beneficial to the soul work as well?"

He had been going down the wrong path previously.

In the end, soul oracles were just individuals who learned a unique soul-related cultivation technique. Their aim was to gain the ability to transfuse their soul into another individual and possess their body to achieve the goal of 'immortality'. Even though Zhang Xuan was unable to find any soul oracle cultivation techniques, he had a bunch of soul cultivation techniques in his arsenal.

In his journey from Tianxuan Kingdom, all the libraries that he visited would have several books concerning the psyche and the soul.

Even though they were foundation manuals, and there wasn't much benefit from cultivating them... he had a huge mountain of them!

These manuals were useless to him previously, but if he were to compile them along with this Soul Guiding Art, what would happen?

With fiery eyes, Zhang Xuan chuckled lightly as he willed.

"Soul cultivation technique and psyche cultivation technique manuals!"

Huala!

All of the related books immediately appeared before Zhang Xuan. There was a huge quantity of them, and placed side by side, they could easily fill up ten of the humongous bookshelves within the Library of Heaven's Path. Making a rough estimation, there were at least a few dozen thousand of them.

The psyche and the soul were also important to a cultivator, and as such, there were quite a lot of cultivation techniques on them as well.

However, they were much cruder compared to the Soul Guiding Formula.

Most of them were about putting one through hardship so as to build one's mental fortitude.

"Compile!" Zhang Xuan muttered.

Hula!

The several dozen thousand books immediately fused together to form a single book.

Zhang Xuan hurriedly grabbed it and opened it up.

"The soul of a human is incomparably profound and mystical. It can be cultivated along with one's body, and it can also be drawn out individually. The body and the soul are two separate entities, and yet, they form a single whole..."

A new cultivation method was detailed in the book.

Swiftly looking through it, Zhang Xuan's breathing hastened and his eyes gleamed in excitement.

As expected... There were no flaws!

A Heaven's Path cultivation technique!

Compiling the soul oracle's Soul Guiding Formula along with the psyche and soul cultivation techniques of ordinary cultivators would actually create a perfect cultivation technique!

The issue of incompatibility between one's soul and body would become non-existent!

In other words, cultivating this technique, one could become a soul oracle. However, one wouldn't be bound by the limitations of soul oracles. One's soul would still be able to fuse perfectly with one's body, and one would still be able to cultivate like an ordinary cultivator.

All of the flaws from before had been perfectly solved!

"Great! Time to cultivate!"

Even though it sounded complicated, all of this only happened in a few breaths. After swiftly memorizing the Soul Guiding Formula, Zhang Xuan gathered his concentration and started to cultivate.

The energy in his body flurried as he gradually drew his soul out from his body.

Heaven's Path Soul Art was just a technique to draw one's soul out from one's body. There was no need to absorb spiritual energy or utilize external tools such as spirit stones or that sort. As such, its cultivation was exceedingly easy.

Geji! Geji!

It felt as though he was forcing something out from his body, and yet at the same time, it felt as though he was leaping off a tall cliff. For a moment, he seemed to have lost control of himself.

Weng!

The world before him immediately changed. When Zhang Xuan finally regained his composure, he saw another him standing quietly before him. On the other hand, he was floating lightly in the air.

His soul had successfully left his body!

As expected of a Heaven's Path cultivation technique. It didn't take him too long to successfully cultivate the Heaven's Path Soul Art.

Looking around the surroundings, Zhang Xuan tried to see if he could sense the soul oracle's presence but to no avail.

It seemed like that fellow was hiding in a secure location. Otherwise, it was impossible for even the Eye of Insight to be unable to detect him.

Hu!

He returned to his body.

His vision suddenly turned dark and he staggered.

Even though his soul didn't leave his body for too long, he still felt extreme fatigue.

Only after circulating his Heaven's Path zhenqi around his body did he recover slightly.

Opening his eyes once more, he saw Zhao Ya and the others gathering around him with worried eyes.

"Teacher, are you alright..."

They had just barely finished reading through the Soul Guiding Formula, and before they had the time to fully comprehend the essence of it, they saw their teacher stumble so they immediately rushed forward worriedly.

"I'm fine!"

Zhang Xuan chuckled. However, a doubt suddenly rose in his mind.

When his soul left his body previously, that soul oracle should have noticed something. If so, why wasn't he reacting?

Could it be that... a soul drawn using the Heaven's Path Soul Art was different from that of a soul oracle's, that's why he didn't notice anything?

"Let me give it a try!"

Zhang Xuan's eyes gleamed and the edges of his lips curled up. Facing the crowd, he waved his hands.

"Everyone, don't cultivate the technique first. I've looked through the formula and I realized that it's impossible for one to successfully draw out one's soul using this. I think he's trying to dupe us by giving us a bogus cultivation technique!"

"Bogus cultivation technique? Ridiculous!"

Hearing those words, a cold voice boomed across the hall.

Chapter 508

I Can Teach You

The crowd didn't expect Zhang Shi to say such words, and they were perplexed.

"Ridiculous?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Look at this verse 'Diffusing the zhenqi throughout one's body into the various acupoints to augment the materialization of the soul'. Under normal circumstances, a cultivator would gather the zhenqi from the acupoints into the dantian so as to store, accumulate, and utilize it. However, this verse is telling one to dissipate their zhenqi, that's no different from crippling one's own cultivation... If one were to really do so, how are they to advance their cultivation in the future? Even if they were originally powerful, if they were to cultivate using this formula, they will only grow weaker and weaker!"

"This..."

Everyone was stunned.

It was normal for zhenqi to flow to and fro the acupoint and dantian. Only through this would a cultivator's body and soul be nourished and grow stronger.

But why did Zhang Xuan speak as though it was crippling one's cultivation?

"Now that you speak of it... It does seem a bit like crippling one's cultivation!" After a moment of silence, Hall Master Sai finally spoke up.

Even though it was normal for one to diffuse one's zhenqi across the acupoints in his body, if one were to do it at a rapid rate, it would be the method to crippling one's cultivation.

"My words aren't wrong, are they?" Seeing that someone was agreeing with him, Zhang Xuan nodded his head in satisfaction. "You are trying to have us slowly dissipate our own cultivation so as to get rid of us in one go!"

The Library of Heaven's Path detailed the various flaws of the Soul Guiding Formula. All Zhang Xuan had to do was to state a few.

That voice harrumphed.

"Nonsense! Only by diffusing one's zhenqi to the various acupoints will one be able to protect one's soul with zhenqi so that it can exist out of the body. Otherwise, given how none of you have reached Consonant Spirit realm, your souls won't be able to move around independently considering how limited your soul energy is!"

Upon reaching Transcendent Mortal 5-dan Consonant Spirit realm, one's soul energy would be significantly boosted, allowing even an ordinary cultivator to be able to draw his soul out of his body. However, given that their cultivation didn't allow for it yet, they could only guard their own souls with zhenqi. Why did the other party speak as though it was a cultivation crippling technique?

"Protecting one's soul with zhenqi? You sure know how to phrase your words. Fine, let me ask you then. What does one's zhenqi gushing out of the huishen acupoint mean? The huishen acupoint is the area where one's spirit is concentrated. If zhenqi were to gush out of this area, it could potentially result in death! If I'm not mistaken, if one were to cultivate using this formula, even if one manages to draw one's soul out of one's body, one's body would suffer tremendous damage or even die!" Zhang Xuan said.

The voice fell silent.

One of the most important aspects of drawing one's soul out of one's body was the death of one's physical body. Only then would one's soul be free from its physical restraint to wander around freely.

But of course, as long as the soul were to return to the physical body, one's heartbeat would resume and one would be 'resurrected'.

Not allowing the other party to continue speaking, Zhang Xuan harrumphed and continued. "Taking me for example, with my cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 1-dan, even if I were to successfully draw my soul out, the compatibility between my body and soul would deteriorate. If I'm not mistaken, to sustain my appearance as an ordinary human on the surface, I would have to consume pills every day! Am I right?"

Even if it was just a temporary separation between one's body and soul, after the body

experienced a temporary state of pseudo-death, the compatibility between one's body and soul would deteriorate. Without pills to sustain oneself, it was just a matter of time before one's bodily functions deteriorated, and death marks started appearing on one's body.

It was just like how organ transplants in his previous life worked. Once one donated one's own organ, even if one were to receive it back, one's own body would still reject it. Without medicine to sustain oneself, it would just be a matter of time before it was spoiled.

"You... How did you know?" The voice exclaimed in bewilderment.

This was a secret among soul oracles, and they made sure never to let outsiders learn of it. How in the world did this young man learn of it?

"It doesn't matter whether how I learned of it. While it's true that reaching Consonant Spirit realm can help to alleviate the damage caused by the Soul Guiding Formula... even for one as strong as you, do you dare to walk in the midst of a storm?" Zhang Xuan continued.

"I..."

The voice quivered.

Souls were of yin attribute whereas lightning was a highly yang attribute natural phenomenon. Even if a soul oracle was hiding within a body, they would still have to retreat before lightning. They would no longer be able to live life as an ordinary human.

Similar to the issue of one being rejected by his own body, this was a highly-guarded secret of soul oracles... For that fellow to deduce so much with just a glance at the Soul Guiding Formula... Are you for real?

Knowing that it was impossible for the flaws recorded in the Library of Heaven's Path to be wrong, Zhang Xuan chuckled.

Placing his hands behind his back, he walked up to the tablet and spoke slowly, "Putting aside lightning, let's talk about the onset of the night, a daily occurrence. Every day, at zi hour (23:00 - 01:00), when the yin energy is the most concentrated, when yin energy seeps into your body, do you feel an unbearable itch plaguing you,

and only by drawing one's soul out is the itch alleviated?"

"Soul oracles don't rely on a physical body for their strength! So what if one's physical body is in discomfort? As long as one's soul remains fine, that isn't a trouble at all?"

Stumped once more, the voice harrumphed coldly.

"You're right. The soul oracle's greatest strength is their soul. Even if their physical body is ruined, it isn't a huge deal for them. They can simply possess another one and through such, live on in perpetuity... However, without the protection of a physical body, can you really survive... the Five Soul Declines?"

Lifting his fingers, Zhang Xuan named, "Possession Decline, Senescence Decline, Combat Decline, Searing Yang Decline, and the most fearsome of all, Sense Decline!"

"You... actually know of the Five Soul Declines?"

The voice was no longer able to retain its calmness.

"Possession Decline refers to the natural decline of strength when possessing the body of another. Even at the minimum, it would cause a drop of two whole cultivation realms. As such, unless truly required, a soul oracle won't possess anybody.

"Senescence Decline refers to the irreconcilable conflict between one's soul and physical body. This will cause one's soul to slowly deteriorate with time. In order to maintain one's strength, one can only continue cultivating frenziedly.

"Combat Decline refers to how one's cultivation would decline when using soul energy to fight. As such, what soul oracles specialize in is beguiling souls and creating fearsome mirages. In truth, soul oracles rarely fight squarely.

"Searing Yang Decline. Just as said before, soul oracles don't dare to come into contact with elements that are rich in yang energy. Just by coming into proximity with such objects can cause your soul to weaken.

"While the first four declines are troublesome, they are still avoidable. What is the most fearsome of them all is the fifth one... Senses Decline!

"A human possesses five senses and six perceptions. They are able to perceive shame, distinguish right from wrong, and comprehend pride and honor. However, souls are

incapable of housing these. The more intense the emotion, the greater to the damage to one's soul. A soul oracle's emotion would cause huge ripples in their soul, resulting in their soul energy dissipating automatically..."

Chuckling softly, Zhang Xuan raised his eyelids and asked, "Is there any mistake in what I've said?"

Terrified, the voice stuttered, "Y-you..."

The heaven is fair. Soul oracles were able to live a significantly longer lifespan than their peers, but in exchange, they had to suffer pain unimaginable by others.

They were bound by innumerable restrictions. They weren't permitted to love or hate, and they were confined to remaining only within the shadows.

Just that... the Five Soul Declines was a classified secret among the soul oracles. Even the Master Teacher Pavilion failed to uncover this matter back then. So how in the world did this fellow learn of it?

Was it because of the Soul Guiding Formula?

If that was really the case, wasn't his understanding of cultivation techniques a little, no, way too deep?

After recovering from his shock, the voice harrumphed.

"You... There's no need to talk so much! All cultivators, regardless of whether they are a soul oracle or not, are fighting against the heavens, so how can their lives possibly be smooth-sailing? Soul oracles experience the Five Soul Declines, but normal cultivators also experience the Five Ordeals—heaven, earth, human, wealth, and law! Since it is impossible to avoid suffering, one should just become a soul oracle and enjoy an unlimited lifespan!"

There was no cultivator whose safety was guaranteed. Crises revolved around the life of cultivator, be it from nature or other cultivators. Suffering and death were unavoidable.

Someone had once made an estimate. Out of a thousand cultivators, at least nine hundred and ninety-nine would die on the journey to reaching Transcendent Mortal pinnacle. It was, in the truest sense, one in a thousand.

Even though the presence of the Master Teacher Pavilion had significantly reduced wars throughout the continent, there were still powers vying with one another for influence, cultivators fighting with one another for valuable artifacts, one's cultivation going berserk... These were all ordeals that cultivators had to face, and many had died in the midst of these struggles.

"Unlimited lifespan? Are you sure that a soul oracle's lifespan is unlimited?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head, "Even if one can avoid Senescence Decline by cultivating non-stop, are you sure that one can really stand this kind of suffering? If I'm not mistaken... your physical body has already decomposed entirely! Without a physical body to protect your soul, even though you're still sustaining your existence, you are undergoing immense anguish every single day!

"Putting everything aside, just talking about noon every day, when yang energy in the air is the most concentrated, are you sure you can get used to that sharp piercing pain on your soul? If not for this tomb being hidden deep beneath the lake, do you think that a soul like you have been able to survive until now?"

"Y-you..."

Hearing those words, the voice was no longer able to suppress his fear. His voice quivered even more vigorously.

The other party was right.

A soul could continue on for an eternity... but a body couldn't.

Even when hiding in the darkest corner in the world, a soul without a body would still undergo tremendous pain at noon every day, making one wish that one was dead.

In fact... the other party had thought of death innumerable times. However, as a soul, physical damage was ineffective against him as he wasn't able to kill himself. In the end, he could only continue living on in such a wretched manner.

"So, tell me, is there a problem with this cultivation technique? Is it worth learning it?"

Hearing that the voice had lost its composure, Zhang Xuan pushed on.

"There's indeed a problem with it, but... what kind of cultivation technique can be

flawless?" The voice screamed hoarsely.

"You're wrong! Look at this verse 'Devoid of thoughts, guide one's soul around the tianzhu acupoint and leave via the huishen acupoint... '. If it were to be changed to 'Gather one's soul, break through the huishen acupoint and escape through the tianzhu acupoint... ', what do you think would happen?" asked Zhang Xuan.

"The tianzhu acupoint possesses a yang attribute whereas the huishen acupoint possesses a yin attribute. Naturally, a soul is of yin attribute and as such, it won't be affected by yin energy. Through this method, one can minimize the effect of Searing Yang Decline or even... completely nullify it?"

The owner of the voice was a soul oracle expert who had immersed himself in the study of souls for innumerable years. After hearing the new formula that Zhang Xuan proposed, he began muttering and all of a sudden, he froze.

The other party had only changed a few words but this had changed the essence of the technique. Through using one's internal yang energy to nourish one's soul, one could reduce the effects of Searing Yang Decline or even completely nullify it.

It was just altering the sequence of the two acupoints but it had further refined the Soul Guiding Formula, bringing it a significant distance closer to perfection.

"But... if you were to change it like that, there would be a high requirement on the quality of one's zhenqi. Otherwise, given how narrow one's huishen acupoint with, a soul wrapped with zhenqi will surely be unable to pass through..."

After a moment of contemplation, the voice eventually deduced that it was impossible.

Before drawing one's soul out of one's body, one had to wrap his soul with zhenqi first. If one's zhenqi wasn't pure enough, the impurities contained within would prevent one's soul from passing through the huishen acupoint.

"Zhao Ya, display your zhenqi to him!"

Instead of answering him, Zhang Xuan turned around and instructed.

"Yes, teacher!" Stepping forward, Zhao Ya pointed his finger forward and a surge of zhenqi gushed out.

"This..."

Sensing the purity of the zhenqi, the voice trembled.

"Do you think it can pass through the huishen acupoint?" Zhang Xuan chuckled.

"It can... but not everyone's zhenqi can be as pure as hers..." The voice sounded slightly low.

"That's not a problem. Do you wish to learn it? Acknowledge me as your teacher then!"

Zhang Xuan chuckled.

"I can teach you!"

Chapter 509

The Deceived Soul Oracle

Pu!

Hearing those words, Zhao Feiwu, Hall Master Han, and the others nearly coughed up a mouthful of blood.

Aren't we in danger? Isn't the other party threatening to kill us?

Soul oracles, as one of the most sinister occupation in the ancient times, are even more feared than poison masters. Not to mention, the other party is significantly stronger than them, possibly even reaching the zenith of Transcendent Mortal realm...

How did it suddenly turn out that you are going to accept the other party as your student?

Can it get even more exaggerated than this?

Even though you are a master teacher, you have only barely stepped into the Transcendent Mortal realm. On the other hand, the other party is a Transcendent Mortal pinnacle expert! The gap between the two of you is immeasurable... Aren't you afraid of being killed for saying such words?

Luo Zhu widened his eyes in shock.

When this Zhang shi first came to the soul oracle tomb, he didn't know anything about the occupation at all. However, just by glancing at the Soul Guiding Formula, he immediately learned about the Five Soul Declines and even found a way to solve it...

It is no wonder why even the heaven acknowledges you... Your strength is truly fearsome!

Sun Qiang and the others were also awed.

As expected of young master, he is indeed as incredible as always. It doesn't matter

whether the other party is a 6-star soul oracle or a Transcendent Mortal pinnacle expert, all have to bow before him...

"Acknowledge you as my teacher?"

The owner of the voice also seemed a little flabbergasted.

As a 6-star oracle, a being whose cultivation has reached Transcendent Mortal pinnacle, how can I acknowledge you, a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan ant, as my teacher? You must be pulling my leg!

"Audacious..."

Infuriated, his voice became sharp and piercing.

Kacha!

The sound of the mechanical trap whirring into operation sounded, and a gleam of light suddenly shot toward Zhang Xuan, as though trying to teach him a lesson for his rudeness.

Hu!

However, before it could even reach him, Zhang Xuan had already stepped away, dodging the sword qi easily.

No matter how formidable a mechanical trap was, it was inflexible. By using the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan could make judgements beforehand and dodge assaults easily with the Heaven's Path Movement Art. It wouldn't be easy to hit him.

"There's no need to waste your efforts. If you were to make a move yourself, you might still be able to injure me. Mechanical traps... You should just drop this ludicrous idea. The trap at the entrance was stopped by me. Do you think that these things will be useful against me?" Zhang Xuan said impassively.

"Hmph!"

The voice harrumphed furiously.

Even though the mechanical trap at the entrance was powerful, the young man still

managed to stop it with a single kick.

No matter how powerful his mechanical trap here was, it was truly unlikely for him to be able to injure the other party.

Thinking so, the owner of the voice fell silent. The mechanical traps also stopped their operation.

Even though the mechanical trap was powered by the kinetic energy of the waterfall, there was still a limit to its ammunition.

Seeing that the other party had dropped the idea of resorting to the mechanical traps, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief within.

Regarding the traps, if he had to come into direct contact with it before he could form a book, learn of its flaws, and deal with it.

However, there were many mechanical traps scattered around the room, and Zhang Xuan had no idea where they were as well. He might be able to dodge one, but if the other party were to attempt to launch all of the traps at once, given Zhang Xuan's limited capability, it would be impossible for him to get away unscathed.

In truth, the words he had just spoken were mostly a lie. He didn't really expect to succeed.

Facing this kind of hidden adversary, he had to use his words to outwit the other party.

"It's such a pity!"

Even though the other party had stopped his assault, Zhang Xuan had no intentions to stopping here. Shaking his head, he sighed in dismay. "It's such a good opportunity but you simply let it slip past you. Sigh, you are indeed such a soul—brainless!"

"You..."

Hearing those words, the voice nearly spurted blood from frustration and died on the spot.

The heck!

I am a 6-star soul oracle, who do you think you are speaking like that too?

Putting aside how you are only a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan cultivator, even a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan would have to tremble before me. Yet, how dare you dream of taking me in as your student, even going to the extent of calling me brainless...

You are the one who is brainless, your entire family is brainless!

"Don't think that I'll restrain myself just because I intend to possess one of you. If you are that intent to die, I don't mind granting your wish at this instant..."

The voice was laced with threat.

"Kill me? Do you dare?"

With a look of disdain, Zhang Xuan glanced in front and said, "Besides, you are just a monster who been dead for innumerable years already. All you have left are your mechanical traps. If you can kill me, you would have done so yourself previously. You wouldn't be threatening me now!"

"You..."

"You, what you?! If you have the capability, come and kill me now. Stop wasting time! Otherwise, hurry up and show us your three trials. To think that you are a 6-star soul oracle, how can you be so dumb?"

Zhang Xuan sighed. "Forget it. Even if you want to acknowledge me as your teacher now, I don't want to accept you anymore. I'm afraid that you'll pull down my reputation!"

"You..."

The owner of the voice was about to explode.

You are scared of your reputation being pulled down if I acknowledge you as my teacher?

Can you be any more shameless than that?

Seeing that the other party was leaping in anger, Zhang Xuan continued, "Why? Has all of your cultivation has gone to your mouth, and you are incapable of fighting anymore?"

"You are seeking death!"

Seeing Zhang Xuan's annoying face, the owner of the voice exploded.

Hong long!

A violent ripple diffused in the air and an overwhelming might suddenly crushed down on the crowd.

The soul oracle was initially hesitant to fight for fear of Combat Decline. However, choking with anger from the words of the young lad before him, he could no longer hold himself back anymore.

Hula!

A force suddenly crushed on Zhang Xuan's neck, as though an intangible hand was grabbing onto it, lifting him up.

"Teacher..."

"Zhang shi!"

Seeing that the soul oracle was provoked into making a move, everyone panicked. They hurriedly rushed forward.

"You want to kill me? It won't be that easy!"

Despite being suffocated, Zhang Xuan didn't panic. Instead, chuckling lightly, he willed and a gray scale-like object appeared before him.

Weng!

A light buzz.

A barrier of light embraced his body. As though coming into contact with burning oil, the hand grabbing onto Zhang Xuan quickly retracted.

"AH!"

The voice yelled in agony. From the looks of it, he seemed to have sustained significant injuries from it.

Dragon Scale Amulet!

This was the object that he'd obtained at the Appraiser Hall some time ago. Based on the evaluation of the Library of Heaven's Path, it could ward off the attack of a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert three times. The time had finally come to use it!

An amulet only had protective capabilities. However, once activated, it would return the force from the other party's assault back to him in the form of a backlash.

This was precisely the reason why Zhang Xuan intentionally used his words to provoke the other party into action.

In any case, he could use this amulet thrice. Furthermore, as long as the fellow remained hidden, everyone else could only be manipulated by him. Thus, Zhang Xuan decided to lure him out despite the potential risks.

Besides, given the age of the tomb, the other party was likely to have been dormant for a significant period of time already. His cultivation would have surely already deteriorated greatly, and in his weakened state, it was impossible for him to break the defense Dragon Scale Amulet!

With just a single strike, the other party was already severely injured.

"This..."

Everyone thought that Zhang Shi would be doomed given how the powerful soul oracle decided to make a move himself. They didn't expect him to possess a tool so strong that it could even injure a 6-star soul oracle. As such, they were astonished by the sight.

"I will kill you..."

Severely injured, the soul oracle flew into a frenzy. He bellowed furiously as he prepared to launch a second round of attack.

"You want to kill me? You might have been able to succeed a moment ago but now... I'm afraid you don't stand a chance anymore!"

The barrier of light could be sustained for several breaths. Seeing that it hasn't dissipated yet, Zhang Xuan charged forward toward the stone tablet.

He didn't know where the other party was previously so there was no way for him to attack the other party at all. However, after the other party had executed a battle technique, not only did the Library of Heaven's Path reflect the other party's flaws, it had even detailed his current location.

Hong long!

With the immense might of two hundred thousand ding, the stone tablet was immediately smashed to smithereens.

After smashing the tablet inscribed with the Soul Guiding Formula, Zhang Xuan didn't stop. Instead, he continued charging all the way to the coffin. Just as everyone thought that he would forcefully smash open the coffin, the other party's hands swiftly pat on several places over the coffin, his movements so swift that it left after images in its wake.

Pah pah pah pah!

It was a consecutive sixteen pats. There was seemingly no specific logic behind his blows, and his strikes weren't heavy either. With such force, he might have been able to break ordinary boulders but it was completely useless against a coffin that was crafted by a high-ranked blacksmith like this. No one had any idea what he was thinking of.

After that, he paused for a moment. Just as everyone was baffled by Zhang Shi's actions, the latter suddenly turned around, "Hall Master Sai, your saber!"

"Saber? Alright!"

Hall Master Sai was taken aback for a moment before registering what Zhang Xuan said. Flicking his wrist, he took out a saber and threw it to the other party.

It was the same one that Zhang Xuan used back at the Formation Master Guild to carve the formation plate.

Grabbing the saber, Zhang Xuan's aura abruptly changed. A sharp aura suddenly emanated from his body.

Huala!

The saber fell down with immense might.

Boom!

As soon as the saber came into contact with the coffin, a loud explosion sounded. It was as though someone had lit an explosive within the coffin, causing the thick coffin lid to blow up and burst into the surroundings. The immense force from the explosion lodged the fragments of the coffin lid onto the tough wall.

"Shattered by none, the lock of Crimson Metal, an undisturbed rest for ten millenniums... This is a Crimson Metal Coffin! Even a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan would be helpless before it. For Zhang Shi to break it open with a single slash... How is this possible?"

Upon seeing the sight, while others didn't think much of it, Luo Zhu's body trembled in shock. He was on the verge of going insane.

"Crimson Metal Coffin? You mean... the Crimson Metal Coffin crafted by 6-star blacksmiths using an alloy of deep ocean metals?"

Upon seeing Luo Zhu's state, Hall Master Sai fell into a short moment of contemplation when realization suddenly struck him, and his eyes narrowed.

"Indeed! It's that Crimson Metal Coffin!" Luo Zhu nodded his head.

"Isn't it said that... once the coffin is sealed, no one will be able to open it? Why would..." Realizing the impossibility of the matter, Hall Master Sai also went into a frenzy.

As the head of the Appraiser Hall, he had seen countless invaluable artifacts, and he had heard of many different treasures as well.

Generally, coffins could be divided into nine main grades. Take for example, the four coffins at the other chamber are known as Grade-7 Adamantine Coffin, forged using incomparably resilient top-quality metal. Even Spirit intermediate-tier weapons

would find it hard to break it.

And above the nine grades of metal was crimson metal!

Crimson Metal Coffins were crafted by 6-star blacksmith. It was designed such that once it was sealed, no thief below the cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 9-dan would be able to break it.

Such came the saying 'shattered by none, the lock of Crimson Metal, an undisturbed rest for ten millenniums'!

In order to not be disturbed after death, many powerful cultivators would specially hire a blacksmith to craft a coffin of that tier for them so as to ensure that their corpses would remain intact and that no petty tomb raiders would be able to disturb their peace.

For Zhang shi to break a coffin that only Transcendent Mortal pinnacle experts could break, how could they not be astonished?

It was already an amazing feat that they didn't faint upon realization.

To see through the flaw of the Soul Guiding Formula with a single look, to injure a 6-star soul oracle, and to break the Crimson Metal Coffin with a single slash...

Was this Zhang shi... really just a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan?

Chapter 510

Seven Hearts Underworld Lotus

Before the duo could recover from their shock, Zhang Xuan's saber continued slashing down and struck a corpse lying in the coffin.

Huala!

As soon as the corpse came into contact with the saber, it was immediately reduced to dust, scattering into all directions.

"The body of a Transcendent 9-dan should be as tough as diamond, how could it possibly be reduced to dust by a single strike of saber qi?"

When one's cultivation reached Transcendent Mortal 9-dan, not only would one's soul energy increase, one's physical body would also become flawless. As though a diamond, it would become impervious to corrosion and no weapon would be able to leave a mark on it.

Even after death, considering how the corpse had been protected by a Crimson Metal Coffin all along, it shouldn't have been reduced to dust by a single strike of a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan cultivator.

"Could Zhang shi's saber art really be that strong?"

"That's not it. While Zhang shi's saber art and saber qi are strong, he still isn't strong enough to break a Crimson Metal Coffin and reduce the physical body of a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan into dust," Jin Conghai said with a grim expression.

After consuming a pill, he had recovered significantly from his previous injury.

"Then what's going on?"

"Let's continue watching first. Zhang shi will definitely have an explanation for it!"

Jin Conghai shook his head.

Everyone turned their attention to the man in front of them.

Zhang Xuan didn't stop after dissipating the tomb owner's corpse with a single slash. With a flick of his wrist, he whipped out several silver needles and tossed them into the coffin.

As the silver needle shot into the coffin, everyone suddenly heard a piercing scream.

"AH... What are you doing?"

It came from the mysterious voice from before.

At this moment, the arrogance in that fellow's voice had disappeared altogether, replaced by fear and disbelief.

"I'm not doing anything much, just digging you up!"

Chuckling lightly, Zhang Xuan slotted his saber deep into the coffin and flicked his saber up. Hu! A black lotus appeared before everyone.

This lotus was around the size of a palm, and a black aura shrouded its tip. Every single one of its leaves were pierced with silver needles.

The silver needles that Zhang Xuan shot before were aimed exactly at this flower.

To think that such a peculiar lotus would be hiding beneath an indestructible Crimson Metal Coffin in this incredibly deep tomb. Even when seeing it with their own eyes, everyone still took in a deep breath, unable to believe their sight.

Hu!

In truth, it had only been a few breaths since the tomb owner attacked Zhang Xuan to when the lotus was unearthed. Only at this instant did the Dragon Scale Amulet's glowing barrier finally disappear.

"Could this be..."

Upon seeing the lotus, Luo Zhu contemplated for a moment when something suddenly struck him. His eyes rapidly narrowed and with a quivering voice, he uttered, "Seven Hearts Underworld Lotus?"

"Seven Hearts Underworld Lotus? What is that?" Hall Master Sai asked out of curiosity.

Even though he was knowledgeable, he wasn't omniscient.

Soul oracle was a mysterious occupation even during the ancient times, and very little was detailed about them.

"It is said to be an invaluable treasure for soul oracles. It can be used to forge a new physical body, and on top of that, the forged physical body will possess a unique constitution!" Luo Zhu explained.

"Unique constitution?" Hall Master Sai widened his eyes in shock.

As long as one's unique constitution was activated, one's rate of cultivation would exceed ordinary cultivators by many times.

To be able to forge a physical body that possessed a unique constitution...

That was way too fearsome!

"Indeed. However... something seems amiss!" A moment later, Luo Zhu hesitated.

"What's wrong?"

"The Seven Hearts Underworld Lotus survives by absorbing energy. If I'm not mistaken, the corpse of the tomb owner must have been absorbed clean. Otherwise, it's impossible for a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan corpse to be reduced to dust by Zhang Shi's strike!" Luo Zhu said.

"Un!" Hall Master Sai nodded in agreement.

They had been perplexed over how Zhang Xuan managed to reduce a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan corpse into dust with his sword qi. From the looks of it now, this bizarre flower must have sapped the energy remaining within the body dry.

"Since the Transcendent Mortal 9-dan corpse had been used to nourish the lotus, the lotus should have already bloomed and turned into the tomb owner's physical body. Why... would he still be lying in the coffin, trying to possess us?" Luo Zhu finally asked doubtfully.

"This..."

Hall Master Sai and the others, realizing the bizarreness of the situation, fell into contemplation.

Indeed! If the other party had an invaluable object like the Seven Hearts Underworld Lotus which could serve as his physical body, why would he need to possess others? Not to mention, even going through all of the trouble of having everyone cultivate the Soul Guiding Formula!

Wasn't this a completely pointless action?

"I don't understand it either. However, I think Zhang Shi might have the answer. Otherwise, he couldn't have possibly opened the coffin and dug out this lotus!" Luo Zhu said.

"Un!" Everyone immediately turned their eyes over to Zhang Xuan.

At the coffin, that voice was still screaming.

"You... let me go!"

Being dug up, the black lotus screeched in fright.

The tomb owner who had threatened to kill everyone earlier was hiding inside.

It was no wonder that they couldn't find the origin of the voice earlier. Given that the tomb owner was hidden in a lotus beneath the coffin, how could they possibly have found him?

"Let you go? So that you can continue killing us?"

Zhang Xuan rolled his eyes.

"Y-you... As long you as let me go, we can talk things through. As a soul oracle, I have accumulated quite a lot of treasures. I can give them all to you. If you desire, this Seven Hearts Underworld Lotus can be yours as well," that voice said anxiously.

"Give this lotus to me? No thanks..."

Zhang Xuan harrumphed. "Also, you spoke of the treasures you accumulated? Haven't you exchanged all of them into spirit stones to feed this lotus already?"

"How... did you know?"

A frightened voice echoed from within the lotus.

"How did I know? The dust around the lotus all came from crumbled spirit stones, it's not like I'm blind!"

Zhang Xuan shook his head.

In truth, it wasn't that the lotus was buried underground. Rather, it was placed with a huge stack of spirit stones. However, after the spiritual energy from those spirit stones were extracted, they became a layer of dust covering the lotus.

Zhang Xuan had once used a Spirit Gathering Formation to extract spiritual energy from spirit stones and a large quantity of similar waste product had appeared before. Thus, he was able to recognize it at first sight.

Furthermore, this dust was more translucent and paler than the low-tier spirit stones that he used for his training. Most probably, the spirit stones used were at least of middle-tier.

Judging from the size of the pile, that must be at least a mountain of ten thousand middle-tier spirit stones... Even for a 6-star soul oracle, that should be his entire wealth.

Having deduced all of this, how could Zhang Xuan possibly fall for the other party's lies?

"Y-you..."

The lotus trembled violently as though it had seen a ghost.

It seemed like in all of his clashes with the other party, he hadn't even won once.

The other party seemed to be omniscient, knowing every single thing about him.

"All of you, come over!"

Ignoring the tomb owner's frightened shivering, Zhang Xuan waved his hands and beckoned the rest of the group over.

Only then did the others rush forward.

Unable to stand the intrigue any longer, Zhao Feiwu asked, "Zhang shi... What is going on?"

Everyone also stared at Zhang Xuan with a look of bewilderment.

Everything had happened too abruptly. It was just a moment ago that the tomb owner was laughing gleefully at controlling everyone's life and death when, in the blink of an eye, he was dug out from the ground...

This bizarre turn of events had left everyone completely baffled.

"What's going on? I think you should be the one to explain..."

Zhang Xuan patted the black lotus in front of him.

Huala!

The black lotus trembled slightly. At this moment, the voice seemed to have turned mute, unable to speak a single word at all.

It seemed like being found and pummeled by a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan weakling had left it so stifled that it didn't feel like talking at all.

"Do you think that you have a choice?"

Seeing that the other party was unwilling to cooperate, Zhang Xuan lifted his hand and a needle appeared between his fingertips. Then, with a swift movement, the needle impaled a leaf of the lotus.

"AHHH..."

A cry of agony immediately sounded within the lotus, and the voice hurriedly gave in, "You... I'll speak, I'll speak..."

The voice sounded much feebler than before. Clearly, the silver needle had struck its

vitals, resulting in a tremendous fall in its strength.

"Let's hurry up and begin then!"

Plucking out the silver needle, Zhang Xuan infused zhenqi into the silver needle once more, causing it to gleam coldly. It seemed that if that fellow were to hesitate for even an instant, the needle would immediately impale the lotus's body.

"Yes..."

Terrified by the threat, the lotus trembled and hurriedly spoke, "I am a 6-star soul oracle, and my cultivation has reached Transcendent Mortal 9-dan pinnacle... However, even until the very end, I failed to make the final step. Even though my soul still managed to live on, my physical body reached its limit!"

At Transcendent Mortal realm, one's longevity would be increased by twofold. However, that would only add up to two hundred years. Even those who were blessed with exceptionally long lifespans only managed to reach three hundred at maximum.

As long as one didn't surpass this realm, one's physical body would be restrained by that limit.

This was the way of the world.

Even though soul oracles could sustain themselves by possessing others, naturally, their own body was still the most compatible with their soul.

"It was then that I found this... Seven Hearts Underworld Lotus!"

The voice continued, "This item is the greatest treasure for us soul oracles. As long as it matures, it can be molded into a physical body, not to mention, the body would possess a unique constitution. With this, I might just be able to overcome the last hurdle and surpass the Transcendent Mortal realm! Thus, I began making preparations for my funeral and squandered all my wealth on building a tomb. This is all so that I can focus my efforts on nurturing this lotus."

"Un!" Everyone nodded their heads.

In truth, they had been a little intrigued by the existence of this tomb. Since soul oracles were able to possess the body of other cultivators, why would one waste their fortune

and effort on building a tomb beneath a river?

From the looks of it now, it was all so that he could nurture this lotus without any disturbances.

After all, given how rare and valuable the lotus was, it would be disastrous if other soul oracles were to learn of it.

Thus, he chose to fake his death.

Even though soul oracles were able to achieve immortality via their soul, they were impeded by the Five Soul Declines so it wasn't entirely impossible for a soul oracle to die. Thus, the other soul oracles didn't suspect a thing when he buried himself in his tomb.

"But if that is the case, why haven't you succeeded yet?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Soul oracles had already been destroyed for dozens of millenniums already so this tomb surely had a longer history than that. Judging from such, the other party should have been done nurturing the lotus by now already. But if that was the case, why was he still in such a state now?

After all, if he had succeeded, he would have already molded the lotus into a new body for himself already. Why was he still stuck inside the lotus, unable to leave?

"I..."

Hearing the question, the voice hesitated for a moment before replying, "After the tomb was built, I faked my death and began nurturing this lotus. I thought that, given my strength and experience, I'd be able to succeed swiftly. However... I never thought that... I would actually fail!"

"Fail?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed. "Since you went to the extent of faking your death, you must know the method to nurturing this lotus. How did you fail?"

That fellow had prepared for this matter over such a long time, converting all of his possession into spirit stones and burying himself underground, even going to the extent of finding a celestial designer to build the tomb and a 6-star craftsman to forge the coffin. With such thorough preparations, how did the other party fail?

"That's because... because..."

The tomb owner's voice trembled, as though recalling something fearsome.

"This... This isn't a Seven Hearts Underworld Lotus but a... Nine Hearts Lotus!"

Chapter 511

The Truth of the Incident

"Nine Hearts Lotus?"

This time, not only did Zhang Xuan frown in confusion, even Luo Zhu was perplexed as well. He hadn't heard of this name.

"That's right! Seven Hearts Lotus is known as a sacred object capable of being molded into a physical body but... the Nine Hearts Lotus is an object that has never appeared in the Master Teacher Continent before. If a tier must really be assigned to it, then it can surely be considered as a God artifact!" the tomb owner said.

"God artifact?" Hearing those words, everyone froze.

Just like cultivation techniques, artifacts and tools could be classified by the ranking God, Saint, Spirit, Phantom, and Mortal. Saint artifacts were something that couldn't be found even if one were to ransack the entire Myriad Kingdom Alliance. As for God artifacts, they were things that belonged only to the legends only. It was a mystery as to whether they existed on the Master Teacher Continent or not.

Yet, this black object was actually an artifact of that tier?

That was way too fearsome!

One must know that even Kong shi failed to obtain any God artifacts back then!

"Given my cultivation, how can I possibly succeed in nurturing a God artifact? Not only were all of my possessions sucked dry, my soul was even imprisoned in this lotus for dozens of millenniums..."

At this, the tomb owner suddenly sounded extremely depressed.

It was no wonder why he was down. After all, he had expected to achieve great things after molding himself a new body. How could he have known that not only would he fail, he would even end up being imprisoned within the lotus, devoid of even the choice

of terminating his own life... It already took a miracle for him to retain his sanity until now.

Ordinary humans would have long succumbed to the despair already. To be able to hang on until now, the other party's mental fortitude was indeed extraordinary.

"So, you intended to have one of us replace you so that you could regain your freedom?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"That's right," the tomb owner replied. "After being trapped for dozens of millennia, all that is left on my mind is how I can escape from the demonic grasp of this wretched plant. After a very long time, I finally came up with an idea!

"Since the Nine Hearts Lotus didn't devour me after such a long period of time, it could only mean that it doesn't possess the ability to do so. Thus, if I can find another soul to replace me, I just might be able to escape!"

In other words, the tomb owner intended to find a scapegoat.

All the Nine Hearts Lotus wanted was a soul. As long as he could find another soul to replace him, he would be able to escape from this abyss.

"After deciding on this, I began trying my best to divide my own soul. After many years of hard work, I finally managed to divide a small part of myself. However... its cultivation is only at Transcendent Mortal 3-dan. With such weak cultivation, it is unlikely for it to live for too long before it is consumed by Senescence Decline. Who could've known that... at this moment, a tomb raider would arrive!"

Taken aback, everyone immediately turned their gazes to Luo Zhu.

The latter's face reddened.

Having his identity exposed in public, he felt a little embarrassed.

After all, this occupation wasn't a glorious one. It was no different from a petty thief or burglar.

"Thus, I formulated a bold plan! I would make the entrance traps slightly easier so that the tomb raider could enter successfully. After which, I would find an opportunity to... possess him!"

The tomb owner continued, "In the end, I really succeeded. Terrified, that fellow quickly left this area. Initially, my idea was very simple. After possessing him, I would make use of the Soulless Metal Humanoid to attract more people here before choosing a suitable soul among them to replace me. However, I never expected his soul to be so strong. Not to mention, after the possession, my cultivation had been significantly weakened. Thus, I ended up in a standstill with him, and eventually, I even got killed by a weak, plump man..."

At which, the lotus trembled with deep resentment.

"Cough cough!" The weak plump man scratched his head awkwardly.

Back then, he only managed to devour the soul that tried to possess him due to the Heaven's Path zhenqi in his body. In comparison to the other party, his cultivation indeed didn't mean much.

At this point, everyone finally understood the entire situation.

This explained why Luo Zhu was able to enter and escape the tomb despite the presence of such a formidable soul oracle here. It turned out that the other party had intentionally allowed him to leave just to attract even more people here.

The plan was indeed feasible, just that he didn't expect to meet a monster like Zhang Xuan. The soul that took him innumerable years to divide out was cleanly wiped away.

"Wait a moment..."

Zhang Xuan frowned and waved his hands. "Since you were able to sever a part of your soul and send it out from the lotus, why do you still need to lure more people here?"

Since the fellow's main goal was to leave the lotus, severing a part of his soul should do the job as well. There was no need to go through so much trouble to lure so many people here. After all, he would be putting himself at risk by bringing publicity to the tomb.

Since the divided soul was also a part of him—it carried his thoughts and consciousness as well—the main issue he had at hand should have been solved.

"You're right. However... that soul was severely damaged when I tried to push it out from the lotus. As such, it wasn't going to survive for long! Besides, that doesn't solve

the root of the problem. The main bulk of my soul would still continue to suffer here. The only way for me to free myself completely from this lotus is to have another soul take my place," the tomb owner said.

"Then... Why didn't you just bewitch Luo Zhu to replace you? What if he'd left for good?" Zhang Xuan continued to ask.

It wasn't easy for Luo Zhu to appear after countless years of waiting. How could the tomb owner be so certain that Luo Zhu would bring people here? Wouldn't it have been easier to just have the other party replace him first?

"Tomb raiders are of yin nature. Such people will never be able to cultivate the Soul Guiding Formula," the tomb owner replied. "Besides, look at his age. He's already got one foot in the grave. Besides, his cultivation is sorely lacking, what use would it be even if I were to possess him? Face death once more?"

Luo Zhu's face reddened.

He didn't expect to be snubbed just like Sun Qiang...

Hearing the explanation, Zhang Xuan nodded his head in realization.

All of the puzzle pieces fit now.

Soul Oracles suffered from Possession Decline, and every possession would cause their cultivation to fall steeply once. Since that was the case, they should choose a good body to possess right from the start.

"Later on, when the soul that I severed was destroyed, I thought that all hope was lost. But you all came... And the rest unfolded as you know!" The tomb owner said.

"Then, you tried to make us cultivate the Soul Guiding Formula, and once our soul were out, you were going to use the name of clearing the trial to have our souls come into contact with the lotus. This way, our souls will be drawn in, thus... becoming your replacement," Zhang Xuan said.

"That's right!" The tomb owner didn't deny the matter.

Only at this instant did everyone realize the entire situation, and cold sweat drenched their back.

The other party had said that he wanted to test them, but from the looks of it now, if they were to really cultivate the Soul Guiding Formula and succeeded in it, their soul would have been imprisoned by this bizarre flower and their body would've been possessed completely.

It was fortunate that Zhang Shi caught onto the other party's ploy. Otherwise, the aftermath would have been unimaginable.

"That's not right!" Zhao Feiwu frowned. "Given how powerful you are, you could have totally torn our souls from our physical body to feed the lotus, right?"

The other party was a 6-star soul oracle who could even lay out the Oasis of the Mirage Deity while even the strongest of their group was only a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan cultivator. Tearing out their soul from their body shouldn't have been anything hard!

Why did he have to go through so much trouble of having everyone cultivate the Soul Guiding Formula?

"Allow me to explain this!"

Zhang Xuan glanced at the lotus indifferently and said, "It's not that he doesn't want to do it but... he can't!"

"He can't?" Everyone was taken aback.

"There are two reasons for this. Firstly, a soul oracle suffers from Strength Decline and forcefully using one's soul energy to extract the souls of others would cause immense damage to oneself! Secondly, he has been trapped by the lotus for a very long time, and controlling the traps and attacking me are already the limit of his ability. It is completely impossible for him to fight with us all at once! Otherwise, he would have long made a move already. He wouldn't have to hide himself and resort to all of these traps!" Zhang Xuan explained.

After the other party's attack, a book was compiled by the Library of Heaven's Path.

Otherwise, he couldn't have been so brave as to charge forward to dig up the lotus.

Trapped by a God artifact, it was already very difficult for the other party to exert energy and force himself out of the lotus. Controlling the traps were already a huge difficulty for him. If he could kill the crowd so easily, he wouldn't have to do things in

such a roundabout manner.

Hearing Zhang Xuan's words, everyone came to a realization.

It was no wonder why this soul oracle acted so hesitantly before weaklings like them, choosing to conceal his own presence. It turned out that... this fellow was all talk. In truth, he wasn't capable of doing anything to them at all.

The tomb owner also didn't expect that even his weakness would be seen through by this young man, and his eyes were filled with fear and defeat.

Initially, he had been thinking that if the other party was unaware of this, he could still use this as a leverage against him. However, even his last hope had been shattered now.

On top of that, the other party's silver needles had been pierced into the areas where he could transmit his will out of the lotus from. As such, he couldn't even control the traps now. His life was completely in the hands of the other party now.

Now that the mystery had been unraveled and the powerful 6-star soul oracle had been subdued, everyone heaved a sigh of relief. Zhang Xuan turned to the lotus and demanded, "Alright, tell us about the Dragon Severing Lock!"

The entire area had been sealed, and the only way to leave was to break the Dragon Severing Lock. Since this fellow was the one who sealed the place, he had to have a way to leave as well.

"This... There's no other exit!" The tomb owner spoke awkwardly.

"No other exits? Then how do you intend to leave after possessing one of our bodies?"

Zhang Xuan frowned.

Since this fellow intended to escape from the lotus, he must have taken into consideration his escape route as well. He couldn't possibly possess another body only to be stopped by his own Dragon Severing Lock!

"I can... escape using the means of a soul oracle!" The tomb owner said.

"Means of a soul oracle?" The crowd asked in confusion.

"Look on top. At the top of the tomb, there is a mechanism that will open up a path all the way to the surface of the lake when triggered... Soul oracles are able to fly around freely due to their light souls... On the other hand, normal Transcendent Mortal cultivators are incapable of flight... That's why I told you all, it's futile!" the tomb owner said.

"Fly?"

Everyone turned their gazes to the top and saw that there was indeed a portion which seemed a little bizarre. However, given the height of the ceiling, even the Transcendent Mortal 4-dan Hall Master Sai would be unable to reach it.

Needless to say, escape from this tomb.

Chapter 512

Flying? I Can Do It!

Even though Transcendent Mortals were far stronger than Fighters and possessed a significantly greater degree of control over nature, they were still incapable of flight. It was at least seventy to eight meters from the ground to the mechanism on the ceiling, and the surrounding walls were tough and slippery. It was nigh impossible to climb up!

"What can we do then? Are we... supposed to just die like that in here?"

Hearing those words, the hope in everyone's hearts extinguished in an instant.

Since this fellow had failed to possess any single one of them, naturally, he couldn't use his soul oracle abilities. Besides, even if he could, he wasn't trustworthy!

This formed a huge dilemma. If they didn't find a solution, they might just end up being trapped down here for life.

"How about this? One of you all sacrifice yourself to allow me to possess your body so that I can take all of you out. Otherwise, if this goes on, it's just a matter of time before your rations run out, " the tomb owner said.

Given that this was an enclosed space, no matter how much sustenance they had, it would just be a matter of time before it ran out.

Seeing that the fellow hadn't given up yet, Zhang Xuan slapped the lotus in displeasure.

"Shut up, it's not your place to speak here!

"You don't need to worry about how we're going to leave here. You currently have two choices before you. You can choose to become my servant and jot down your soul oracle ability down for me. In exchange, I'll find a way to free you from that lotus."

"Servant?" The tomb owner was taken aback, and he nearly burst into tears. "Aren't I supposed to acknowledge you as my teacher?"

"The offer has already passed. If you'd agreed just now, not only would I have freed you, I'd even have imparted the complete cultivation technique to you so that you wouldn't need to fear the Five Soul Declines. However... it's already too late!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands impatiently.

"I..." The tomb owner sounded a little constipated, and he was so frustrated that he could die on the spot.

That was to be expected. Back then, he'd still possessed the upper hand and had some leverage over the other party. Given the other party's identity as a master teacher, he wouldn't stoop so low as to harm his own student... But now, he was nothing more than a captive. His life and death hinged on a thought of the other party. It was already benevolent of the other party to offer to take him in as his servant.

After a moment of silence, the voice helplessly said, "What's the second option?"

"I'll slowly interrogate you, and once I get my answers, I'll dispose of you!" Zhang Xuan spoke impassively.

He couldn't help but tremble at his words. Even though the other party had spoken calmly, the tomb owner knew that the other party would really do it.

"Alright, I, Mo Hunsheng, am willing to be Zhang Shi's servant..."

The fellow before him had overcome his assault, saw through his ploy, and even opened up a sealed Crimson Metal Coffin. His means and capability were way off charts. It would probably be a walk in the park for the other party to eradicate him. There was no need to hesitate at all.

After living for so many years, he understood the value of life.

As long as he could free himself from this wretched lotus, being a servant was the least of his worries.

After making up his mind, the tomb owner prepared to speak when the other party's impatient voice sounded, "What are you trying to do?"

"I'm making a vow..." the tomb owner, Mo Hunsheng, replied.

Pah!

"What's the use of making a vow? Sign a soul contract! Don't tell me that a soul oracle like you doesn't even know something as basic as this!" Zhang Xuan slapped the lotus.

You must be joking! Given the innumerable mysterious means that soul oracles possess, I would be a fool to trust your vow.

"Soul contract?"

The lotus trembled.

He was about to go insane. He thought that he could fool the other party with a show, and as soon as he freed himself from his restraints, he could teach the other party a lesson. Yet, who knew that... the other party didn't even fall for his trick!

A soul contract was something similar to a contract with a tamed beast. Once it was established, one mustn't go against it. Otherwise, one's soul would dissipate.

For a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert like him who was just a step away to reaching a whole new realm to sign a contract and become the servant of a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan cultivator?

The more he thought about it, the more frenzied he felt.

"Why? Aren't you willing?"

Just as he was still feeling conflicted, he felt a silver needle pierce him and a surge of pure zhenqi seared his soul.

"AH... I agree..."

It was clear that his life was in the grasp of the other party. Mo Hunsheng dared not hesitate any longer. A white light flashed, and a sliver of soul gushed into Zhang Xuan's head.

Soul contract established!

"Alright!"

Sensing his control over the other party's life and death, Zhang Xuan knew that the other party had completely submitted to him. Only then did he flick his wrist and put

the lotus away into his storage ring.

Regardless, this was a God artifact. It might be capable of incredible things so he decided to study it after they returned.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan turned to Hall Master Sai and the others and said, "I hope that everyone here will refrain from spreading news regarding this lotus!"

Zhao Ya and the others were his student so they were trustworthy. However, the same could not necessarily be said about the rest of the group.

After all, a God artifact was a treasure surpassing that of even Saint artifacts. If news of its existence were to leak, Zhang Xuan would definitely be pursued to the ends of the world.

Even if other people didn't dare to attack him in the open for fear of the backlash from the Master Teacher Pavilion, it was hard to guarantee that they wouldn't resort to underhanded means.

"Zhang shi, rest assured. If I reveal this matter, may the heavens smite me and my soul fall into oblivion!"

Knowing what the other party was worried about, Hall Master Sai raised his hands and vowed to the heavens.

Following which, Zhao Feiwu, Jin Conghai, Gu Mu, Luo Zhu, and the others did the same as well.

They understood the danger behind carrying something beyond one's means to protect.

Zhang Xuan had taken away the most valuable lotus whereas Sun Qiang had kept the other coffins in the first chamber. Given that everyone had worked hard in coming here, they couldn't possibly just leave empty-handed.

Thus, Zhang Xuan pointed to the coffins around and offered, "Un. Since you've all worked hard in coming here, you can't simply leave empty-handed like that. Those coffins were forged by 6-star blacksmiths so they could be considered as treasures as well. I believe they should fetch quite a sum!"

Those were Crimson Metal Coffins forged by 6-star blacksmiths, and they were all extremely resilient. They were of equal quality to Spirit pinnacle weapons even though their utility might not match up to it.

If sold, it could definitely fetch a considerable sum.

"There's no need for it, we ended up contributing nothing at all..."

"Zhang shi, you're being too polite..."

Understanding Zhang Xuan's intentions, the crowd hesitated for a moment before eventually shaking their heads.

If not for Zhang shi, they would have surely all died. To take something on top of that... they were too embarrassed to do so.

But even though they didn't obtain any treasures, they still managed to obtain a part of the Soul Guiding Formula. If they were to study it, it could prove to be beneficial to their cultivation.

"Since you all aren't interested in it, I won't stand on ceremony then. Sun Qiang, collect everything here..."

Before they could finish turning down the offer, Zhang shi's voice sounded once more.

"Great!"

After which, Butler Sun immediately rushed forward excitedly and moved all of the coffins, including the one which Zhang Xuan had wrecked previously, into his storage ring.

"..." The crowd.

The person in front of them was obviously such a formidable master teacher, and if he wished for it, everyone would rush forward to fulfill his demands. Yet, he was still such a scrooge.

That coffin had already broken into numerous fragments and yet he was still collecting all of the pieces, one at a time. If he could, would he go to the extent of even dismantling the mechanical system?

Just as they were thinking so, the other party's voice sounded, "Sun Qiang, bring Little Mo around and take away all of the traps that can be dug up. Those are good items!"

"..." The crowd.

"Cough cough... Zhang shi, it's still too early to be scavenging for treasure. Regardless of whether it is the mechanical traps or the coffin, we have to first be able to get out first..."

Choking on her saliva, Zhao Feiwu couldn't help but say.

The most important issue at hand was neither the revelation of the existence of the lotus or the scavenging of the mechanical traps and coffins... It was to find a way to leave this area!

Given that the Dragon Severing Lock was in place, the group couldn't go back the way they'd come from. On top of that, they were incapable of flight as well. If so, how were they supposed to leave here?

If they couldn't leave this area, it would be meaningless even if he were to take everything of value here.

"Get out? Hasn't Little Mo spoken about that already? There's a path on top!"

Zhang Xuan pointed.

Seeing how the other party lack of depth in thoughts, everyone was speechless. Zhao Feiwu rolled her eyes and replied, "But... it's so high! We aren't able to fly so how are we supposed to leave?"

"It's just flying," Zhang Xuan replied nonchalantly. "I can do it!"

"You can do it?"

Shocked, everyone widened their eyes in shock.

Are you for real?

Even a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert was incapable of flight, and yet, you, a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan cultivator, said that you are... able to do it?

"Un!"

Nodding his head casually, Zhang Xuan explained, "It's just an ability of a Celestial Master Teacher, it's nothing much!"

Just like the lotus, the issue regarding the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps should not be made known to outsiders. However, given the circumstances, Zhang Xuan couldn't possibly hide his ability of flight any longer. Thus, he decided to attribute the matter to an ability of a Celestial Master Teacher.

In any case, Celestial Master Teacher was a completely spontaneous event and not everyone would be able to become one. Even if one was jealous, there was nothing one could do about it.

Besides, there had only been one Celestial Master Teacher in the world before Zhang Xuan—Kong shi. Thus, no one could say for sure whether Celestial Master Teachers were capable of flight or not, and there was no way they could verify it as well. As such, this was the ideal excuse.

"Just flying..."

Everyone was on the verge of puking blood.

That was flying... It was something that even Transcendent Mortal 9-dan experts were incapable of. Yet, why do you think of it as easy as though going to the market to buy cabbage?

At the same time, they also felt perplexed. Were Celestial Master Teachers really granted the ability of flight as well?

But... they didn't recall seeing it in any of the books regarding Kong shi?

Even so, Celestial Master Teachers were a mysterious existence, and so, no one could say what they were capable of for sure.

"Wait here for a moment!"

Driving his zhenqi, Zhang Xuan began rising up into the sky, flying swiftly toward the mechanism at the ceiling.

Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps—Parallel Heaven Scroll!

Back when Zhang Xuan was at Half-Transcension, he could only sustain himself for a few breaths before falling down. Now that he was at Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle, his zhenqi had become purer and thus, the duration he could sustain himself had increased.

His limit was currently dozens of breaths.

In this short period of time, it was impossible for him to travel a great distance. Even so, opening a tunnel and flying out of it was a simple task.

"He's really flying?"

Seeing Zhang Xuan floating up, the mouths of the crowd twitched violently.

Flight had always been one of the greatest dreams of mankind. Yet, a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan was currently soaring in the air...

This was way too fearsome!

"It's best not to reveal anything regarding Celestial Master Teachers and soul oracles to anyone else... Zhang shi is a person who will achieve great things in the future. We cannot afford to offend such a person!"

After a long moment of silence, the same thought appeared in everyone's mind.

A hero would eventually shake the world with his name, a dragon would eventually dominate the skies.

A person destined for great things could only be befriended. By no means should one ever offend such a person.

And Zhang shi...

...was such a person.

Chapter 513

The Method to Save Lu Chong

Hu!

Ignoring everyone's shock, Zhang Xuan reached the ceiling and touched the mechanism.

Then, his fingers began operating swiftly, tapping on various protrusions on the ceiling.

Possessing the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan could easily find the flaws within a mechanical trap. It was just like with the Crimson Metal Coffin before. Even though it was known to be 'unbreakable', in truth, if one were to find the flaws and exploit them, it wouldn't be a problem at all.

This mechanism was the same as well.

Kacha!

After a few taps, a crisp sound echoed and a boulder slowly split open, revealing a passageway. Zhang Xuan immediately dived into it.

The passageway was completely dark. There should be another mechanical system installed above the passageway to prevent the lake water from collapsing in.

After walking several dozen meters, he saw a gigantic boulder. As long as he knocked the boulder open, he should be able to return back to the bottom of the lake.

Just like with the entrance, there was a unique mechanical system installed here which allowed humans to pass but prevented the lake water from gushing in.

"Formidable!"

Taking a brief sweep of the mechanical system, Zhang Xuan realized that its design wasn't inferior even when compared to formations. He couldn't help but feel awed.

As expected of a celestial designer. Some of the systems behind the mechanical traps were so complex that many men wouldn't get it even if they spent their entire life studying them.

After recuperating for a moment and recovering from the massive expenditure from the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, Zhang Xuan finally returned back to the crowd once more. He took a rope from Luo Zhu and fastened it to the passageway.

The group didn't hesitate and hurriedly climbed up.

They were all cultivators so even though they weren't capable of flight, scaling a rope was extremely simple.

Swimming up the lake, they finally returned back to the shore. Everything they just went through suddenly felt like an illusion, as though a dream they'd all had.

Even though they were only in the soul oracle tomb for a short moment, they had been on the verge of death and experienced despair. To think that they would be able to see the surface once more.

"Thank you, Zhang shi!"

After drying his clothes with zhenqi, Hall Master Sai stepped forward and bowed earnestly.

As expected of a Celestial Master Teacher. In the face of such danger, unlike the rest of them, he was able to maintain his calmness and use his wits to twist the situation around. Through doing so, he even managed to turn a 6-star soul oracle into his servant.

If he hadn't witnessed it with his own eyes, he wouldn't dare believe this to be true.

"You're being too polite, everyone has worked hard as well. Since we are in no hurry to leave, why don't we rest here for the night?"

After all that they had gone through, the sun had already set. Stars shone brightly in the sky, and a crescent moon was hanging above the top of the mountain. The atmosphere felt peaceful.

There was a slight scent of autumn in the air. Green had faded from the leaves on the

trees, turning into a more yellowish shade. A mountain wind blew past, caressing the group with a chilly touch.

"Alright!"

Hearing that they were in no rush to leave, the crowd heaved a sigh of relief.

Their mind had been tense during the entire time in the soul oracle tomb, and that had left them in a withered state. They felt even more exhausted than if they had fought an intense battle.

This was the Demon Cinque Beast's nest, and there weren't any spirit beasts who would dare to wreak havoc here. Everyone started a campfire and whipped out the food they had stored in their storage ring. Before long, the fragrance of meat began wafting in the air.

Zhang Xuan was also ravenous. While he was in the midst of digging into his food, Wang Ying suddenly walked over and asked concernedly, "Teacher, what's wrong with your neck?"

"Neck?"

Taken aback, Zhang Xuan grabbed the copper mirror that Wang Ying offered him and observed his neck carefully. Below his lower jaw, there was a portion that was slightly gray.

"Oh, it is caused by Little Mo's soul oracle aura. Don't worry, it'll fade away very soon!"

Back when they were still in the soul oracle tomb, in order to bait Mo Hunsheng so as to use the Dragon Scale Amulet against him, he allowed the other party to grab him. It was probably then that the mark was left behind. Even so, it wasn't very conspicuous and one wouldn't notice it unless when paying close attention to it.

It was only because of Wang Ying's meticulousness that she noticed it.

A soul oracle was a very different lifeform from a human being, and coming into contact with such a powerful soul oracle, it was perfectly normal for a mark to be left behind. However, it should gradually disappear soon.

"That's good!" Seeing that it wasn't a major issue, Wang Ying heaved a sigh of relief.

"I need you and Zhao Ya to bring Lu Chong over. Meanwhile, I'll investigate some things," Zhang Xuan instructed.

Lu Chong didn't come here along with the crowd. Instead, he was placed on the back of Zhao Feiwu's spirit beast. Now that the Demon Cinque Beast was tamed, it posed no threat whatsoever anymore. Thus, it shouldn't be a problem for them to bring him over.

"Yes!" Knowing her teacher's intention to save Lu Chong, Wang Ying nodded her head.

After delegating several tasks, Zhang Xuan stepped into the Demon Cinque Beast's cave.

The cave was wide and clean. Finding himself a quiet place, Zhang Xuan took out the Nine Hearts Lotus.

He didn't have any time to ask Mo Hunsheng anything when they were in the tomb previously. Since he had some time now, he could properly question him to see if there was any way to save Lu Chong.

"Master!"

Upon leaving the storage ring, Mo Hunsheng immediately realized that he was out of the tomb and a tinge of excitement could be heard in his tone.

After being trapped for several dozen millennia, he finally managed to see the surface once more. The agitation he was feeling at the moment was unimaginable.

As such, his use of 'master' was completely earnest; there wasn't the slightest sarcasm or insincerity in it.

"I want to know if you have any way of waking a dormant soul!" Zhang Xuan asked with a grim expression.

"Wake a dormant soul?"

Mo Hunsheng was stunned for a moment before replying, "To wake a dormant soul, you just have to send your soul into the other party's body to wake him up. It isn't too complicated!"

Zhang Xuan fell into contemplation. In truth, he knew of this method as well. But back then, his soul was still unable to leave his body so he could only drop the idea. But now... everything was different.

Having cultivated the Heaven's Path Soul Art, his soul could already exist separately from his body. He could easily enter the Lu Chong's body to wake up his soul.

"However, this action is very similar to possession. The slightest mistake might result in you taking control over of the other party's body instead." Bound to Zhang Xuan by the soul contract, Mo Hunsheng didn't dare to hide anything from the other party.

Sending a soul into another person's body was an action no different from possession. It was still alright if one could wake up the other party, but if it failed, it was very possible that a possession would really take place, and the intruding soul would suffer from Possession Decline.

"More importantly... if you fail to wake the other party up, your soul might just be acknowledged by the other party's body. If so, it would be impossible to wake the other party up anymore!"

Mo Hunsheng hesitated for a moment before continuing, "After all, a soul capable of intruding into the body of another has to be incredibly powerful. Furthermore, given that the other party's soul is in a dormant state, he must be completely defenseless at the moment. A body which hasn't been nourished by a soul for a very long time is extremely likely to acknowledge the wrong master. If that happens, not only will you fail to save the other party, you might even directly cause his death!"

With a grim expression, Zhang Xuan clenched his fist tightly.

"Is there any way to avoid that from happening?"

Since he was going to make a move, he should ensure that there was a hundred percent chance of success. If he were to fail, how could he face his own conscience?

After all, he was the cause of Lu Chong's current plight.

If he failed to treat his own student, he should be ashamed of being the other party's teacher!

"Avoid that from happening? If the other party's soul becomes resilient and powerful,

then even if you fail to wake his soul up, he should still be in control of his physical body. At the very least, a possession won't occur!"

Mo Hunsheng said. "The best method is to use Soulrouse Grass to forge Soulrouse Incense. If you were to light the incense and allow the person with a dormant soul to breathe it in first, there will be a significantly higher chance of waking him up!"

"Soulrouse Grass?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

As an apothecary, he had browsed through many herbology books but he had never heard of such a medicinal herb before.

"Soulrouse Grass isn't a plant but a unique object bred through the nurturing of a soul oracle's soul!" Mo Hunsheng said.

"How long does it take to grow one?" Zhang Xuan asked.

If it took too long, he would have to resort to other alternative solutions.

"Not too long, just a month! However... my soul is trapped within the lotus so I am unable to grow one..." Mo Hunsheng smiled bitterly.

Even if he wanted to help, trapped in the Nine Hearts Lotus, he was completely powerless.

Instead of replying the other party's words, Zhang Xuan asked, "Can all soul oracles nurture one?"

"Yes. As long as one is a soul oracle who has succeeded in drawing his soul out, one will be able to nurture it. The method is extremely simple, I'll tell you about it now!" Mo Hunsheng said.

Zhang Xuan shook his hands and said calmly, "Un, tell me the method!"

"Alright!"

Thus, Mo Hunsheng began speaking.

Very quickly, he explained the entire process for breeding a Soulrouse Grass.

Just as he'd said, the Soulrouse Grass wasn't a specific plant but an object bred through the nurturing of one's soul. Only then would it harmonize with one's soul and achieve the purpose of waking up a soul.

"It can't be that... you're thinking of learning the Soul Guiding Formula to become a soul oracle and nurture one?"

Seeing that his master had jotted the cultivation method for the Soulrouse Grass down, Mo Hunsheng was taken aback.

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

Since this object was useful to Lu Chong, he did have the intention to plant it.

"But you're a Celestial Master Teacher..." Mo Hunsheng was shocked out of his wits.

His master was a talented Celestial Master Teacher! If he were to cultivate the Soul Guiding Formula, that would be equivalent to giving up his identity... Wasn't that being a little too reckless?

"Don't worry, I've already revised the Soul Guiding Formula. Even if I were to succeed in drawing out my soul, it won't have any adverse effect on my physical body such that my soul will still be able to harmonize perfectly with the body," Zhang Xuan said calmly.

"Revised? Harmonize perfectly?" Within the lotus, Mo Hunsheng's eyes widened into perfect circles and his lips quivered in disbelief.

The Soul Guiding Formula was the cultivation technique that was passed down among soul oracles for innumerable years. Countless experts had revised and improved it, but even so, they were unable to get past this bottleneck. Yet, just by studying the formula for a few breaths, this fellow had actually revised it such that it didn't affect the compatibility between one's body and soul?

How was that possible?

Just as he was thinking that the other party might be bragging, he saw his master's body suddenly sway and an intangible shadow suddenly appeared above the body.

"He drew his soul out?"

The voice trembled.

As a 6-star soul oracle, he could clearly see that his master's soul had already separated from his body.

"Can you see me?" Just as he was overwhelmed with shock, the other party's soul voice sounded. Then, Zhang Xuan stepped forward and sat in front of the lotus.

"I can see you now..." Mo Hunsheng trembled.

Zhang Xuan nodded his head in satisfaction.

It seemed like the soul he drew out using the Heaven's Path Soul Art was similar to his Heaven's Path zhenqi. As long as he willed it to be so, if he wished to conceal his soul, even a higher ranked soul oracle would be unable to see him.

On the other hand, he could also choose to reveal it as well.

Hu!

After confirming this fact, Zhang Xuan returned back to his physical body.

"Return of the Soul... Perfect Consummation, Concord of Acupoints, Harmony of Body and Soul... Y-you really managed to improve the Soul Guiding Formula!"

Seeing that Zhang Xuan's soul had returned back into his body without any problems, and his soul was even resonating in harmony, producing a sound reminiscent of the call of a dragon, Mo Hunsheng screeched in shock and he nearly fainted on the spot.

Chapter 514

But They Are Both Men!

The normal Soul Guiding Formula would cause one's physical body to decline swiftly as soon as the soul was drawn out of the body.

Yet, the person before him was still filled with vitality from head to toe. His acupoints were in concord, and his soul and physical body were in harmony. Not only was he not inferior to any Transcendent Mortal cultivator, his disposition even seemed more refined. His presence seemed to create immense pressure on other souls.

With just a single look, Mo Hunsheng could immediately tell that the Soul Guiding Formula that the other party cultivated was different from his. It had already been improved such that the concept of Five Soul Declines was non-existent. It was at a whole new level.

Legend had it that the founding father of soul oracles, Liu Mozi, had stolen the knowledge of souls from the Heaven's Path to create the occupation. However, due to the imperfection of heaven, the content he stole was incomplete, thus resulting in the Five Soul Declines and the incompatibility between one's soul and body.

The soul oracles in the latter generations tried many means to improve the Soul Guiding Formula but to no avail. Yet, the young man before him had only taken a momentary look and not only did he manage to rid it of all its fatal flaw, he even succeeded in cultivating it...

How could he not be surprised?

"How in the world did you do it?"

After the shock came deep excitement, "A Celestial Master Teacher who is capable of improving the Soul Guiding Formula... Just his strength and knowledge in itself can probably bring me to greater heights..."

The reason why he established a soul contract with the other party was out of helplessness before. However, upon seeing the other party's capability and means, he

suddenly realized that... this might have been the most correct decision in his life!

Following such a talented figure, if he were to earn the other party's favor and guidance, he would definitely be able to surpass his previous bottleneck!

"These are the secret techniques that I have uncovered through my years of research. It might prove useful to master!"

Thinking so, Mo Hunsheng immediately transmitted his knowledge over via his soul.

Soul oracles were capable of transmitting information directly through their souls. This method was much more efficient than reading books or verbal explanation.

Due to the contract forming a bridge between them, this transfer of information was exceptionally efficient. Zhang Xuan felt his eyes blur for a moment when in the next instant, a huge gush of information appeared in his head. They were all regarding soul oracles.

Mo Hunsheng was a 6-star soul oracle from the ancient times. Back then, the inheritance hadn't been terminated yet so the knowledge he knew covered nearly everything regarding the occupation.

"As expected of a feared occupation, it is indeed deep and profound..."

After briefly looking through it, Zhang Xuan's mouth widened in shock.

It was no wonder why the lineage of this occupation could be passed down for innumerable generations, even becoming a subject of fear beyond that of poison masters. Soul oracles were indeed not to be trifled with.

In comparison to all of this, Soul Guiding Formula was indeed just the foundation.

Suddenly, Zhang Xuan saw something and turned to the lotus.

"Did you create this Soul Severing Technique?"

That fellow had been trapped in the Nine Hearts Lotus for dozens of millennia, and it was due to his intense desire to escape that he studied this technique for innumerable years so that he could sever a part of his soul to escape from the lotus.

"I created it through innumerable trial and error..." Mo Hunsheng nodded. "Using this formula, one can create another of oneself such that even if the main soul is destroyed in the future, one can still maintain his existence through this clone!"

"Clone?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"That's right. This severed soul is a complete replica of oneself, possessing even one's complete memories. In other words, it's equivalent to creating a spare soul. If you were to meet with danger, this can serve as your trump card so it isn't too bad," Mo Hunsheng said.

Zhang Xuan nodded his head. He quickly looked through the Soul Severing Technique.

That skill was indeed incredible. Only one who had achieved a profound understanding of souls could create such a skill.

From the looks of it, if it wasn't for this fellow being trapped within the Nine Hearts Lotus and was unable to cultivate, given his accumulation over a course of several dozen millenniums, he could have been an 8-star or even 9-star soul oracle by now.

But that was to be expected. Being trapped during this entire period of time, all he had been focused on was how he could free himself from this hell. If his understanding of souls didn't make any progress, he would truly be a hopeless cause.

"Let me see how many flaws there are!"

Submerging his consciousness into his mind, he entered the Library of Heaven's Path and imprinted the knowledge which the other party sent him onto blank books.

Hu!

After which, he grabbed the book regarding the Soul Severing Technique and flipped it open.

"Soul Severing Technique, created by Mo Hunsheng. Upon mastering the technique, one will be able to divide one's soul into two... Flaws:..."

A huge amount of information was detailed on it.

Reading through the content, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but praise, "Only 120 flaws,

that's rather formidable!"

To create a technique possessing only a hundred flaws through one's individual efforts... Even though Mo Hunsheng may seem unreliable, his talent and capability were indeed top-notch.

How could a 6-star soul oracle possibly be ordinary anyway?

"Compile!"

With a thought, Zhang Xuan fused all of the books regarding souls together to recompile the Soul Severing Technique.

Taking another look at it once more.

There were only ten flaws or so left in it.

"Seems like my books regarding souls are still sorely lacking. I should get someone to buy more for me when I arrive at the Myriad Kingdom Alliance!"

Regarding the Soul Severing Technique being able to be used as a life preservation method, Zhang Xuan was rather surprised.

It was impossible for any cultivator to completely stay out of harm's way. If he were to successfully cultivate this technique, he would have another ace up his sleeves.

However, there were too many flaws with this cultivation technique so he wasn't interested in it for the moment. Even if he wanted to cultivate it, he would have to collect more books and make up for its deficiencies first.

"Now, time to look at the Nine Hearts Lotus!"

Given the humongous quantity of information that the other party sent over, Zhang Xuan knew that it was impossible for him to look through all of them in just a day or two. Thus, opening his eyes, he turned his attention to the black lotus instead.

A 6-star soul oracle had called this item a God artifact. Zhang Xuan was interested to see what effects it had.

Thus, coming into contact with it, he muttered 'flaws'.

Hu!

A book appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Nine Heavens Lotus Embryo, an object descended from the celestial. It requires the nourishment of the purest energy to grow, and upon mature, it could be used to craft the most perfect physical body. Flaws: No.1, it has yet to reach maturity, which is indicated by a white outer appearance..."

"So, it's not called Nine Hearts Lotus but Nine Heavens Lotus Embryo! The part regarding it being able to be used to craft physical body turns out to be true!"

After reading through the first page, Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

From the looks of it, even though Mo Hunsheng had been trapped within the lotus for more than several dozen millenniums, he was still unable to recognize it entirely.

Nine Heavens Lotus Embryo... Even though its exact level wasn't stated within the book, it seemed to be a high tiered object.

"To think that there would be only five flaws!"

Flipping to the second page, Zhang Xuan was just about to continue reading when he froze.

There were only two pages detailing the five flaws of the object.

This was Zhang Xuan's first time seeing an object with so few flaws.

"As expected of a God artifact..."

With eyes reddened in agitation, a thought suddenly appeared in Zhang Xuan's mind, 'If I were to learn the Soul Severing Technique and create a clone while nurturing this lotus to serve as its body, wouldn't it be equivalent to gaining another life?'

The more Zhang Xuan thought of it, the more agitated he felt.

If he were to nurture this God artifact which only had five flaws to create a clone for himself, wouldn't his fighting prowess immediately soar?

"It's a pity that... I probably won't live to the day that this lotus matures..."

One of the flaws written in the book was that the Nine Heavens Lotus Embryo had yet to mature.

A mature Nine Heavens Lotus Embryo should be completely white, but the lotus was currently pitch black in color.

After consuming Mo Hunsheng's entire fortune and living for several dozen millenniums, it was still in this state. Given Zhang Xuan's lifespan of several hundred years, it would be impossible for him to live until its maturity.

It would be impossible to mold it before the lotus reaches maturity. If he were to try it forcefully, he might just end up like Mo Hunsheng, trapped in the lotus and losing his freedom, unable to even end his own life.

Thinking so, a thought suddenly appeared in Zhang Xuan's mind.

'Hmm? This lotus requires the nourishment of the purest energy to reach maturity. My Heaven's Path zhenqi is incomparably pure. Will it suffice as a fertilizer for it?'

In the description regarding the Nine Heavens Lotus Embryo, in the very first line, it was stated that the lotus required nourishment from the purest energy to mature. Zhang Xuan didn't have sufficient spirit stones to feed it but the Heaven's Path zhenqi was incomparably pure. He could definitely give it a try.

Thus, grabbing the stem of the lotus, Zhang Xuan sent a surge of zhenqi in.

"Ah..."

As soon as the zhenqi seeped in, a loud shriek echoed in the air.

"I've already said all that has to be said, please don't kill me..."

Mo Hunsheng was about to go mad. He had only just handed over the information regarding soul oracles when the other party infused his zhenqi into the lotus at the next instant. There was not a single person in his position who wouldn't think that Zhang Xuan was trying to kill him now that his worth had been completely extracted.

"Ah..."

Realizing the significance of his actions, Zhang Xuan hurriedly stopped.

He had only been thinking of nourishing the lotus with his zhenqi. He forgot about the existence of the fellow inside.

Soul oracles carried innate fear of Heaven's Path zhenqi, and not to mention, this fellow had been severely injured by the Dragon Scale Amulet. Thus, how could he possibly be able to withstand the onslaught of zhenqi?

It was already a blessing that he wasn't eradicated in an instant.

Stopping the flow of zhenqi, Zhang Xuan was just about to put the lotus back into his storage ring and study it more next time when he saw that the stem where he infused zhenqi into previously had already turned white.

"It turned white? Could Heaven's Path zhenqi really be effective?"

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. In a state of disbelief, he grabbed another stem and infused zhenqi into the lotus.

"Ah..."

A terrifying scream of agony sounded from the lotus once more.

A moment later, Zhang Xuan grabbed the lotus.

"It has turned white as well! Indeed, Heaven's Path zhenqi can hasten the maturity of this object..."

Looking at the white stems, Zhang Xuan was delighted. Then, turning to Mo Hunsheng, he consoled, "I'm not trying to kill you, I'm just experimenting with this Nine Hearts Lotus. There's no need for you to be anxious, I'm just giving it a try. Just a short moment..."

"Don't! Ah..." Mo Hunsheng cried.

I'll listen to you obediently in the future, alright? If you were to give it more tries, there will be no need for you to get me out of the lotus anymore. I would have already died by then...

...

At the opening of the cave.

"Did something happen? Should we take a look?"

"It sounds like Mo Hunsheng's shout of agony. Is Zhang shi alright?"

Hearing the shout of agony, the group who was in the midst of their meal stood up.

"Zhang shi said previously that there are some things he needs to investigate so it's best for us not to interrupt him. Why don't we first... try to determine the current situation inside before coming to a decision?"

Zhao Feiwu advised everyone with a grim expression.

"Un!"

Everyone nodded their heads and pricked their ears. After which, they vaguely heard a faint voice.

"...There's no need for you to be anxious, I'm just giving it a try. Just a short moment..."

"Don't! Ah..."

...

"Give a try? Short moment? No need to be anxious?"

Everyone stared at one another with widened eyes.

Zhao Feiwu's face turned red, and it took her awhile before she managed to speak.

"But the both of them... are men..."

Chapter 515

Zhao Feiwu's True Identity

After testing it for a bit, Zhang Xuan confirmed that the change in the Nine Heavens Lotus Embryo was due to the Heaven's Path zhenqi. Only then did he reluctantly stop.

Possessing both the method of nurturing the lotus and to sever a portion of his soul, it was now just a matter of time before he succeeded in creating a clone.

But before that, he had to find a way to get Mo Hunsheng out of the lotus first!

Otherwise, as soon as he infused zhenqi into the lotus, an ear-piercing cry could echo in the air. Most probably, before the lotus could even mature, the person trapped inside would have already died.

In the end, a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert servant, even if he was no longer as strong as before, was still better than nothing at all.

However, he had no way of getting Mo Hunsheng out now. Thus, Zhang Xuan turned his attention to the soul oracle cultivation technique.

"I should first cultivate the soul oracle cultivation technique first so that I can nurture a Soulrouse Grass!"

The Soul Guiding Formula that he had cultivated before was similar to the Fighter's Juxi realm. If one couldn't even absorb spiritual energy, one could never become a fighter. Similarly, if one couldn't draw out his soul, one possessed no aptitude whatsoever in becoming a soul oracle.

Soul Guiding Formula was just a technique to draw one's soul out of his body. To strengthen one's soul, one would require another whole new set of cultivation techniques.

As a 6-star soul oracle, Mo Hunsheng had many soul cultivation techniques in his arsenal. Adding his understanding of soul cultivation into the mix, Zhang Xuan managed to gather a thousand books to compile together.

After organizing them, Zhang Xuan realized that he had the perfected Heaven's Path Soul Art all the way until Transcendent Mortal 2-dan. Beyond 2-dan, there were some mistakes here and there in the cultivation techniques, thus making them unsuitable to learn.

"That's around the level of my current cultivation. I should start now!"

Zhang Xuan happened to be at Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle at the moment. If his soul were to reach the same level, he could exert the strength of both his zhenqi and his soul simultaneously, and this could boost his fighting prowess significantly.

Seated cross-legged on the floor, Zhang Xuan drew his soul out and began cultivating via the method detailed in the Heaven's Path Soul Art.

Tzzzzzz!

His soul energy swiftly surged.

After an unknown period of time.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan's soul returned back to his body and he slowly opened his eyes.

It was already daybreak. Sunlight shone in from the entrance of the cavern, blinding Zhang Xuan's eyes.

"After a night of cultivation, my soul cultivation has reached Transcendent Mortal 2-dan!"

Given that Zhang Xuan had the complete Heaven's Path Soul Art all the way until Transcendent Mortal 2-dan, as well as a middle-tier spirit stone to fuel his cultivation, in just a night's effort, Zhang Xuan had already reached Transcendent Mortal 2-dan.

In other words, his soul cultivation was currently beyond his current cultivation.

"However, being a soul oracle is a taboo in the continent. It's best for me not to use the ability of a soul oracle recklessly..."

Just like poison masters, soul oracles were a feared existence. If someone were to

know that Zhang Xuan was able to draw his soul out and his soul possessed fighting power on its own, in the worst-case scenario, he might even be unable to keep his master teacher license.

Thus, unless when put in a desperate situation, Zhang Xuan was determined not to resort to this method.

"I can start cultivating the Soulrouse Grass now!"

Stretching his back lazily, Zhang Xuan stood up.

Mo Hunsheng had already imparted the method of cultivating the Soulrouse Grass to him.

In truth, Soulrouse Grass didn't refer to a specific medicinal herb but one nurtured using one's soul. A herb cultivated through such means would possess the attribute of rousing dormant souls.

But the medicinal herb used couldn't just be any plant. It had to be one that was able to harness one's soul energy.

Such medicinal herbs were hard to find, and so, he could only try looking through the market of the Myriad Kingdom City when he arrived there.

Walking out of the cavern, Zhang Xuan realized that everyone was awake.

All of the fright and fatigue from the journey to the soul oracle tomb had disappeared through a night of rest, and the group seemed revitalized. They had already completed all preparations for departure.

"Let's go to the Myriad Kingdom City," Zhang Xuan said.

Everyone jumped onto the back of Zhao Feiwu's spirit beast and soared into the sky. The Demon Cinque Beast also followed suit as well.

As for Hall Master Sai and Luo Zhu, they had already heard of the Master Teacher Tournament and they were interested in spectating it as well. Thus, they decided to tag along.

Huala!

The spirit beast looked as though a black line shooting through the sky. With the notorious Demon Cinque Beast protecting them, there wasn't a single savage beast or spirit beast who dared to trifle with the group.

In fact, even the experts riding on spirit beasts made sure to keep their distance upon sensing the deep hostility the Demon Cinque Beast was emanating.

Thus, the journey went smoothly without any hiccups.

Five days later, a massive city appeared before everyone's eyes.

This city was even grander than Honghai City, and all kinds of infrastructures were ordered neatly in a specific pattern, creating a beautiful sight.

Looking out of the window from the beast's back, Zhang Xuan could see that the massive city was located in the midst of a giant plain. It seemed as though a clean and massive river flowing through the middle of the plains, bringing it boundless vitality and liveliness.

"The Myriad Kingdom Alliance has embassies from all of the countries that it trades with. There are also markets established by powers of equal standing here. In fact, Tier 2 Huanyu Empire even has a supply point here... There are many powers in the city, but regardless of who they are, as long as they are in Myriad Kingdom City, they have to obey the orders of the Alliance Head Residence!"

Zhao Feiwu chuckled.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

He had heard of the Alliance Head Residence. It was known as the royalty of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, the one that wielded true power within the alliance. He had heard of it from Su shi back when he was in Tianwu Kingdom.

Even though Master Teacher Pavilion possessed an esteemed standing, they didn't interfere in governance. Usually, as long as there was no social upheaval, they wouldn't get involved in anything. As such, the power was mainly held in the hands of the alliance head.

"There is still some time before the Master Teacher Tournament. Why don't you all follow me to the Alliance Head Residence to rest for a few days? You can use these

days to look into the situation before heading to the Master Teacher Pavilion," Zhao Feiwu said.

There were still another two months before the Master Teacher Tournament so there was no need to hurry.

"Alliance Head Residence? Could Zhao gongzi be someone from the Alliance Head Residence?" Hall Master Sai asked doubtfully.

Zhao Feiwu had always been following behind Zhang shi. All along, the rest had thought that she was Zhang Xuan's friend, unaware that she was a local of the Myriad Kingdom City.

Even Zhao Ya and the others only know that Zhao gongzi was an envoy from the alliance. They were unaware of her real identity as well.

"Yes. The alliance head, Zhao Tianhao, is my father!" Zhao Feiwu replied.

"You are Alliance Head Zhao's son? That's not right. Alliance Head Zhao only has a single son, Zhao Hui gongzi, and I've met him before..." Hall Master Sai was taken aback.

Alliance Head Zhao was the most influential person throughout the entire Myriad Kingdom Alliance. His son was in a position similar to the crown prince, and as the head of the Appraiser Hall, Hall Master Sai had met him several times before. Zhao Feiwu clearly wasn't him.

"I didn't intend to deceive everyone here. Just that, for the sake of convenience, I had no choice but to disguise myself!"

Chuckling lightly, Zhao Feiwu rubbed her face and her appearance began changing. Her main appearance didn't change much but her features became more feminine, betraying her identity as a female.

Even though she was still wearing male clothes, her disposition and her appearance were no different from a female. Her complexion was perfect, and she was no way inferior even when compared to Princess Mo Yu.

"You are a woman?"

Only then did Hall Master Sai, Luo Zhu, Zhao Ya, and the others come to a realization.

The only one who was calm amongst them was Zhang Xuan.

When he first saw the other party, the Eye of Insight had already revealed her identity as a lady. Thus, he wasn't too surprised by her confession.

"Zhao Hui is my elder brother, and I am the second princess of the alliance, Zhao Lian!"

Zhao Feiwu introduced herself. "From young, I've been plagued with an affliction. In hopes that I can live like an ordinary person, he conferred me the title of the 'Dancing Princess'. That's where my name Zhao Feiwu comes from!"

(Feiwu means 'dancing around')

"So, it's Princess Feiwu!" Hall Master and Luo Zhu glanced at one another before coming to a realization.

They had long heard of the ill second princess of the alliance head, and according to the rumors, she was suffering from Innate Muscular Deficiency. Despite searching throughout the alliance, they were unable to find a single physician capable of treating it. As such, when they met Zhao Feiwu, given the other party's gender, they didn't think that it would be her.

"I've heard that Alliance Head Zhao conferred this title to the ill second princess in hopes that she could dance lithely like the elegant swallows. However, it's a pity that despite the reward he's offered, no one has managed to find a cure yet. Why would..." Hall Master Sai asked doubtfully.

Princess Feiwu's illness had shocked many. Countless physicians had stepped forward only to leave in defeat. Logically speaking, she should be confined to her bed, unable to move at all. How could she be walking around as though an ordinary human being?

Could there be some falsehood in the rumors?

"Zhang shi saved me!"

Zhao Feiwu chuckled and her bright eyes shone.

"Oh!" Hall Master Sai suddenly came to a realization.

After learning of the other party's identity, he had been wondering why the princess, one of the most authoritative figures in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, would follow Zhang Shi around and treat him with utmost respect. The other party's reply had finally solved this lingering doubt of his.

"I've long heard of Zhang Shi's outstanding medical skills, but I didn't expect you to be so formidable..."

Hall Master Sai laughed bitterly.

Back then, Sun Qiang had bragged about how formidable his young master's medical skills were. At the Coax Ridge, he had witnessed with his own eyes how formidable the other party's Knockout Treatment Method was. However, it was only after hearing Princess Feiwu words did he truly realize how fearsome Zhang Shi's medical skills were.

The princess's Innate Muscular Deficiency had caused a huge uproar throughout the alliance then, and countless physicians had taken a look at her condition only to find that they were helpless against it. Just by the fact that Zhang Shi was able to solve it meant that his medical skills were probably superior to most physicians in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance.

"Zhang Shi, Feiwu didn't mean to lie to you. I beseech for your forgiveness!"

After introducing herself, Zhao Feiwu turned to Zhang Shi and bowed deeply.

Even though this young man was of the same age as her, he had already attained a high level of proficiency as a master teacher, physician, appraiser, formation master... He wouldn't even pale in comparison to that famous elder brother of hers!

This made her feel awe for the other party.

Even though Zhang Xuan knew that the other party was a lady, upon learning that she was the princess, he was still rather surprised. Seeing that the other party was speaking to him, Zhang Xuan suddenly thought of something.

"You're being too polite. Since you're the princess, you should be able to gather news easily. I just so happen to have something I need your help to look into!"

"Zhang Shi, feel free to speak!" Zhao Feiwu nodded.

It must be said that she was indeed extremely pretty. Even though her cultivation was so-so, she had a valiant disposition which accentuated her aesthetics.

After pondering for a moment, Zhang Xuan said, "I wish to purchase a Soulcalming Grass, and the greater its maturity, the better it is. Otherwise, Sentiment Drowning Flower would work as well. It'll be best if they have a maturity of five hundred years and above. More importantly... They should be fresh and alive. Dried herbs will be useless for my agenda. Can Princess Feiwu help me look into the matter?"

To nurture a Soulrouse Grass, the medicinal herb must be capable of harnessing one's soul energy. Over the past few days, Zhang Xuan had been contemplating over the matter and in the end, he concluded that it would be easiest to find these two herbs within the Myriad Kingdom Alliance.

The Soulcalming Grass and Sentiment Drowning Flower.

These two medicinal herbs weren't famous but there were extremely valuable. As Zhang Xuan wasn't well-connected in the alliance, it would be difficult for him to find these herbs. On the other hand, as the princess of the alliance, Zhao Feiwu should be able to find them easily.

"Soulcalming Grass and Sentiment Drowning Flower? Fresh ones?"

Not expecting Zhang shi to ask for these things, Zhao Feiwu frowned.

Chapter 516

Alliance Head

Soulcalming Grass could calm one's mind, placing one in an imperturbable state.

Sentiment Drowning Flower could stabilize one's mental fortitude, making one less affected by emotional changes.

These two medicinal herbs were extremely rare, and there were less than a handful of them in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. For those herbs to be alive and possess a maturity of five hundred years on top of that... The difficulty was extremely high.

"This... I'm not too sure either, but when we arrive at the Alliance Head Residence, I can ask my father about it. Even if he doesn't know where he can find it, I'm sure he can help you look into it," Zhao Feiwu replied.

Zhang Xuan nodded.

Her father, as the head of the alliance, wielded immense influence and power. It should be a walk in the park for him to find a single medicinal herb.

Thus, Zhang Xuan nodded his head and fell silent. Standing quietly by the window, he continued reinforcing his cultivation.

Even though he hadn't reached Transcendent Mortal 2-dan yet, his efforts in the past five days had made his zhenqi had become even purer and denser.

From his experience with the immense zhenqi consumption from the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, he realized that on top of purity, the denseness of one's zhenqi was extremely important as well. As such, in the past few days, he had been working hard accumulating his zhenqi into his dantian. His efforts had increased the quantity of zhenqi had at least increased by a tenth.

One shouldn't underestimate this tenth. Using the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps as a gauge, it could sustain him for another two to three breaths. In this time, he could descend back to the ground, thus avoiding a tragic fall.

For the rest of the journey, there wasn't much of a conversation among the group. The spirit beast continued proceeding forward, and soon, a grand building appeared in everyone's sight.

As the center of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, the Alliance Head Residence carried an imposing aura. Even before arriving at the location, everyone could already feel a heavy pressure pushing down on them.

Chuckling, Zhao Feiwu explained, "Even my spirit beast is not allowed to fly straight into the Alliance Head Residence. Let's alight here!"

The spirit beast they were riding on flapped its wings and descended to the ground. Soon, it stopped at a vast square right in front of the Alliance Head Residence.

Jumping off the back of the spirit beast, Zhang Xuan scanned the surroundings and was awed.

As expected of the center of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. Not only were the buildings towering, they were even infused with spiritual energy. Without even taking a closer examination, it was clear that they were filled with formations.

If someone dared to wreak havoc here, the formations would be more than enough to slaughter them.

It was no wonder that Zhao Feiwu dared not enter the Alliance Head Residence riding on the back of a spirit beast. If she were to do so, it would probably trigger some formation.

Lifting his gaze, Zhang Xuan saw a few soldiers patrolling the Alliance Head Residence. They were all dressed in gray armor and they had a spear each in their hands. A powerful aura could be felt from them.

"Zongshi realm experts?"

Zhang Xuan was surprised. To think that even the most ordinary guards here were Zongshi realm experts!

No one of Tianxuan Kingdom had reached this level, and even in a Tier 2 Kingdom where Liu Shi and the others resided in, that was the level of the old ancestor of a country. Yet, over here, they were only an ordinary guard. The huge disparity was truly

astounding.

But thinking about it, that was to be expected. After all, the Myriad Kingdom City had 4-star master teachers. Just by listening to the class of such an expert, one's understanding of cultivation would surely experience a huge leap. Surpassing one's bottleneck would become significantly easier.

Even if one couldn't listen to the lessons of an expert of that caliber, the lessons of a 2-star and 3-star master teachers were fairly useful as well. Besides, as a prosperous commercial city, the Myriad Kingdom City was rich in resources. As such, it wasn't too surprising for the overall prowess of its population to be much stronger

Zhao Ya and the others had initially thought that Zhizun realm was already formidable. However, after seeing the guards, they couldn't help but feel disheartened.

As expected of the capital of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, it was indeed formidable!

"Your humble servant pays respect to Princess Feiwu and Lord Jin!"

Just as the group were awed by the sight, a group of soldiers walked over and a golden-armored commander stepped forward and welcomed them. Zhao Wufei's Transcendent Mortal 3-dan mount was known by everyone in the Alliance Head Residence. Its presence surely meant that the princess had returned as well.

The commander's aura was slightly influencing his surroundings, thus revealing his strong control over the environment. It was clear from this that he was a Transcendent Mortal expert.

"Prepare a clean and spiritual energy-rich courtyard for my friends to live in. Make sure to serve them well!" Zhao Feiwu commanded impassively.

She had never shown this side of her to Zhang Xuan and the others, but at this moment, the disposition of an authoritative princess was clearly shown through her movement and words.

"Yes!" The commander nodded his head and hurriedly got into action.

"Un!" Nodding her head, Zhao Feiwu turned around and said, "Zhang shi, let me take you to meet my father!"

"Alright!"

Nodding his head, Zhang Xuan delegated some instructions to Zhao Ya and the others before leaving with Zhao Feiwu.

The palace wasn't too extravagant, and there weren't many guards here as well. It was extraordinarily peaceful here, reminiscent of a tranquil garden.

If not for Zhao Feiwu leading the way and the huge number of guards defending the area outside, Zhang Xuan would have thought that he was in the wrong place.

"My father doesn't like a ruckus so there aren't any guards here. Besides, this is the Alliance Head Residence so there won't be anyone so foolish as to cause trouble here!"

Noticing Zhang Xuan's doubts, Zhao Feiwu chuckled.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

Ever since his reincarnation, he had visited various palaces and without an exception, they all had tight security. Yet, this location formed a stark contrast to the norm. It seemed like Zhao Feiwu's father had absolute confidence in his strength.

While the both of them chatted, they walked down several corridors and finally arrived at a large hall.

Someone entered the hall to report their presence. A moment later, the same person returned and invited them in.

Entering the hall, Zhang Xuan immediately saw an authoritative-looking middle-aged man seated on the seat at the direct center of the room. He was exuding an exceptionally powerful aura that wasn't inferior even when compared to the Demon Cinque Beast. Clearly, he had reached Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle as well.

Even when compared to Hall Master Han whom he had seen before, this middle-aged man was clearly much stronger.

The both of them might be Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle experts, but the aura the latter was exuding showed the huge distance between their strength.

It was just like how Hall Master Han Chong and the various elders, despite teaming

together against the Demon Cinque Beast, were unable to defeat it.

"Father!" Zhao Feiwu stepped forward and greeted.

"Un, you've returned!" The middle-aged man nodded his head. Then, his bright eyes fell on Zhang Xuan.

Being in an authoritative position for such a long time, he carried a majestic disposition that naturally commanded fear in others. Even the head of the Physician Guild, Guild Leader Meng, would stutter in fear before him. Yet, this twenty-year-old lad was able to keep his composure.

Just by this in itself, he could tell that the other party wasn't a simple figure.

Smiling slightly, Alliance Head Zhao said, "You must be Zhang shi!"

"I am Zhang Xuan. My greetings to the alliance head!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Un!" Seeing the other party's humble attitude, Alliance Head Zhao felt even more satisfied with the young man before him. "I've heard of your affairs. Despite being under twenty, you are already a 2-star master teacher. You've challenged Tianwu Kingdom's Wall of Dilemma and solved all of the questions on it, undergone the Harmonious Stream of Flowing Goblets and became certified as a 5-star appraiser, and on top of all that, you even managed to save Hall Master Han... Not to mention, you cured my daughter of her affliction as well. You're truly a talented man!"

"Alliance master, I am unworthy of your praise!" Zhang Xuan felt a little bizarre that the other party knew his affairs so clearly, but after giving it some thoughts, he felt that it was to be expected.

After all, his daughter was traveling alone despite having only just recovered from her affliction. Even though Jin Conghai was protecting her, he couldn't help but feel worried. Most likely, he sent some men to keep tabs on his daughter's trail so it wasn't too surprising for him to know of those matters.

Besides, Jin Conghai, as his subordinate, would surely report these matters to him as well.

"Having been in control of the alliance for many years, I've seen many geniuses. However, men of Zhang shi's caliber are indeed rare!" Alliance Head Zhao

complimented.

Just as Zhang Xuan had thought, Jin Conghai had reported most of the matters that they had gone through. Even though he had excluded the matter regarding the soul oracle tomb and the Celestial Master Teacher, the affairs that he had gone through had shocked the alliance master.

Despite being under twenty, the other party was a 5-star appraiser, quasi 4-star formation master, 3-star painter, 2-star master teacher...

His titles and capability could leave anyone and everyone awed.

As the most influential person in the alliance, he had seen countless great geniuses. However, when compared to him, they were all like fireflies before the burning sun

"Zhang shi's aim for coming to Myriad Kingdom City must be to participate in the Master Teacher Tournament, right?" After chatting for a moment, Alliance Head Zhao asked.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

Back then, he had promised Su shi and Ling shi on the matter. Since he was already here now, naturally, he should at least participate in it.

But more importantly, the reward for the Master Teacher Tournament was generous.

"The Master Teacher Tournament gathers countless geniuses from the twenty-seven Master Teacher Pavilions. Even though Zhang shi's talent is outstanding, it probably won't be too easy to rank amidst the top!"

Speaking of the Master Teacher Tournament, Alliance Head Zhao shook his head bitterly.

Having read through the other party's background, he knew that the person before of him had outstanding talent. However, getting a good placing among the twenty-eight powers wouldn't be easy.

If it was that simple, the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion wouldn't have ranked amidst the bottom all this while.

"Forget it, let's not talk about that!"

There were still two more months before the end of the tournament. Knowing that it was still too early to talk of all these, Alliance Master Zhao shook his head. "Zhang shi's extraordinary medical skill has saved my daughter's life. I would like to show my gratitude to you. If you have any request, as long as it's within my means, I'll surely try my best to fulfill it!"

"Alliance head, you're being too polite. However... I do have a request to ask of!"

Since the other party had already made an offer, Zhang Xuan didn't stand on ceremony.

Even though the other party was the powerful head of the alliance, Zhang Xuan had undergone many things in his journey here. Such a situation was no longer sufficient to leave him tense.

Alliance Head Zhao turned his gaze to Zhang Xuan.

"Actually, it's like that. I need a medicinal herb but I'm not too sure where I can obtain it. I hope that the alliance head can help me look into the matter!"

Zhang Xuan raised the issue of the Soulcalming Grass and Sentiment Drowning Flower.

"Soulcalming Grass? I've never heard of it before. However... I do know of one Sentiment Drowning Flower of maturity five hundred years and above. Furthermore, it's still alive!" Alliance Head Zhao hesitated for a moment before replying.

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Soulcalming Grass and Sentiment Drowning Flower were both basic ingredient required for cultivating the Soulrouse Grass. Just one stalk was enough.

"However... even though I know where it is, it won't be easy to get it..." Alliance Head Zhao shook his head.

"Oh?"

"Zhang shi, you'll understand once I finish my part of the story! The place where most medicinal herbs are gathered would be herb kings. Following which would be the Apothecary Guild and Physician Guild. I believe that as a master teacher, Zhang shi

should be well aware of this," Alliance Head Zhao said.

Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

Herb king actually just refers to merchants dealing with bulks of medicinal herbs. In terms of variety and quantity of herbs, there was no one who could beat them. After them would be the Apothecary Guild and Physician Guild, which used humongous quantity of medicinal herbs on a daily basis.

Due to the nature of their occupations, these three parties usually had a huge reserve of medicinal herbs.

Chapter 517

The Reckless Demon Cinque Beast

"However... the herbs from those three parties are mostly dried. They don't possess much herbs that are still alive, let alone a rare medicinal herb like the Sentiment Drowning Flower," Alliance Head Zhao said.

These three locations were where most medicinal herbs were concentrated at. As dried herbs shared the same medicinal property and they were easier to store, most of the herbs were dried before putting into storage. As such, there were basically no fresh medicinal herbs there.

"There are various sources to a herb king's medicinal herbs. The most common source would be the herbologists but rare herbs like the Sentiment Drowning Flower wouldn't appear in those field. Besides, ordinary herbologists don't have the ability to nurture it. I do know of a herbologist who possesses such capability. That person has a herb garden in the west of the Myriad Kingdom City, and she has all kinds of bizarre herbs in her herb garden. Most of them are rare herbs that one could hardly see in the market. However..."

Alliance Head Zhao smiled bitterly, "The owner of the herb garden has an eccentric personality, and she's nearly completely unsympathetic. Her herbs aren't for sale, regardless of how high a price one offers. Back then, I've tried to purchase some unique herbs from her for Lian-er's illness but I was turned away!"

"Aren't for sale?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed. "What does she need so many medicinal herbs for then?"

Given the humongous quantity of medicinal herbs the other party had, she couldn't possibly consume all of it herself... And since that was the case, what was the point keeping them?

Medicinal herbs were just like ordinary plants in the sense that they had a limited lifespan. Even though there were some herbs that could live for several centuries, most only had a lifespan of a few years.

More importantly, planting herbs and maintaining the herb garden were extremely expensive. Spirit stones, unique fertilizer, and manpower—these three were essential for any herb garden. Refusing to sell any medicinal herbs meant that one was pumping money in without any income. No matter how rich one was, it was impossible to sustain in the long run!

"I have no idea either. There are many in Myriad Kingdom City who have been wondering about that but no one knows the real answer!"

Alliance Head Zhao shook his head.

"Then... Doesn't anyone think of stealing from her?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

Given how the other party had the medicinal herbs that most needed, surely there should be some who were willing to take the risk!

"Of course, people try to, but all of them ended in failure! The owner of the herb garden, Xue Yiyao, reached Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle fifty years ago. No one knows what level she has reached since then, and even I am unconfident of defeating her!" Alliance Head Zhao said.

Given how the other party was a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert fifty years ago, even if she had been unable to make a breakthrough, she was probably ranked in the very top among the experts of Myriad Kingdom City.

"More importantly, the herb garden has an exceptionally powerful formation set up by Guild Master Zheng of Honghai City's Formation Master Guild. It is at least of 4-star pinnacle, and many of those who try to steal the herbs within end up being killed or confined before they could even reach the fields... Soon, everyone realized that it is impossible to succeed so no one dared to try so anymore," Alliance Head Zhao said.

Refusing to sell the herbs and killing or confining those who dare to lay their hands on her herbs... This fellow was indeed a tough nut to crack.

"Is there anywhere else that could have these two medicinal herbs?"

"There isn't! Other than this herb garden, I can't think of anywhere else that might this herb, except for dry ones!"

"Dry ones are meaningless to me!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Only living herbs could be used to cultivate the Soulrouse Grass. Once the herb was dried, how could it possibly harness soul energy to gain the effect of waking one's soul?

"Where is the herb garden you speak of located? I would like to take a look myself!"

Zhang Xuan had to nurture a Soulrouse Grass by hook or by crook—this was the only way he could save Lu Chong. Since he even went to a place as dangerous as the soul oracle tomb for it, no matter how troublesome the owner of the herb garden was, he would just have to find a way to deal with her.

"This..." Hearing that the other party wanted to give it a try, Alliance Head Zhao hesitated for a moment. "Alright then. I'll have Jin Conghai accompany you. This way, even if she lays a hand on you, you'll at least be able to withstand her assault for a moment!"

"Alright!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

He didn't know the location of the herb garden so he needed someone to lead the way.

"Father, I would like to take a look as well!" Zhao Feiwu hurriedly said.

"What are you going there for?" Alliance Head Zhao frowned.

"The owner of the herb garden doesn't listen to even your words. I want to see how formidable she is!" Zhao Feiwu chuckled.

Having followed behind Zhang Xuan the past few days, she knew that the other party was a person who would never give up until he achieved his goal. Honestly, she was curious to see whether the difficult herb garden owner or the formidable Zhang shi would emerge victorious in the clash.

Seeing that her father was hesitating, Zhao Feiwu hurriedly added, "Don't worry, Elder Jin is around. Besides, no matter how disrespectful that herb garden owner may be, she won't lay her hands on me!"

After hesitating for a moment, Alliance Head Zhao said, "Alright then. The two of you'd better be careful, especially Zhang shi. If the other party refuses to sell the herb, by no means should you insist on the issue. If it really comes down to it, I'll make a trip myself and perhaps she might sell me this favor."

Back then, he had sent a subordinate to request for the required medicinal herbs only to end up being rejected. After which, he had intended to go over himself but just then, they managed to find some medicinal herbs from the Physician Guild in replacement. Thus, the matter was settled just like that.

Zhang Shi was his daughter's savior, and on top of that, the other party's outstanding talent also made it likely that he would accomplish great things in the future. Thus, if things didn't go well, he didn't mind stepping forward to help.

As the head of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert, no matter how eccentric the other party's temper was, she should still sell the herbs in consideration of his identity.

After asking a few more questions, Zhang Xuan bade Alliance Head Zhao farewell and left with Zhao Feiwu and Jin Conghai. Riding on an aerial savage beast, they left for the west of the city.

The Myriad Kingdom Alliance was exceptionally large, extending for nearly several hundred kilometers. If one were to walk on their feet, it would take several hours to reach the herb garden. This time, the trio didn't ride on Zhao Feiwu's mount but the Demon Cinque Beast.

As a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle spirit beast, its movement was as swift as though a bolt of lightning. In just a few dozen minutes, the trio could spot a gigantic garden appearing before their eyes.

The garden was several hundred mu large, and it was shrouded by a light mist. With just a single glance, one could tell that it was guarded by a huge formation.

(One mu = 666.6 square meters)

"Let's alight here!"

Knowing that they weren't allowed to fly straight in, Zhang Xuan nodded his head and the Demon Cinque Beast landed at an area not too far away from the main door.

The doors to the garden were tightly shut, and there wasn't a single person to be seen at the door. It seemed like everyone knew that the herbs here weren't for sale so they all lost their interest.

Otherwise, given the huge demand for medicinal herbs, it was impossible for a huge herb garden like this to be completely devoid of customers.

Jin Conghai stepped forward and just as he was about to knock on the door, 'jiya!', the door opened and a maid stepped forward.

"Our herb garden doesn't sell any medicinal herb, please leave!"

It seemed like she was already used to people coming over in search of medicinal herbs. As soon as she saw Zhang Xuan and group, she immediately tried to chase them away.

Not expecting to be rejected right before he could say anything, Zhang Xuan felt a little helpless.

How could he hope to purchase any medicinal herb when he was denied entry at the front door?

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to say something to persuade the other party to give way, the galloping of the horses suddenly sounded.

Then, a carriage stopped at a direction not too far away and a middle-aged man alighted.

"Garden Owner Mu, please enter!"

Upon identifying the person, the maid immediately respectfully opened the gates to allow him entry.

"Didn't you say that you don't sell any medicinal herbs? Why is he able to enter then?" Jin Conghai frowned.

This was too stark a contrast. They were being turned away at the door while the other party was allowed to strut it.

Was identity a criterion to entering the garden as well?

"I apologize but he's a guest of our owner. He holds an invitation letter in his hand," the maid spoke apologetically.

"One can enter as long as they have an invitation letter?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

Before the maid could reply, a cold and arrogant voice sounded. "Of course!"

The one who spoke was a curvaceous lady who seemed to be in her thirties. She had a thick make-up on, and even before her appearance, a heavy scent of rouge was already lingering in the air.

"Garden Owner Xue is conducting a banquet tonight and only other garden owners are allowed to enter. Don't think that just any lowly peasant can enter this area. If you wish to purchase medicinal herbs, you should just leave right now. We don't welcome you here!"

Tilting her face up high, the lady spoke arrogantly. Her gaze was filled with cold disdain.

"Banquet? Only garden owners are allowed to enter? If that's the case, you must be a garden owner as well?" Zhao Feiwu said.

"Of course! I am the garden owner of Greenmist Garden, Luo Qingyan!"

With a proud look, the beautiful lady flicked her wrist and took out a letter. It was the invitation to the herb garden.

"Do you see it? This is the invitation letter. If you don't have it, leave right now! Don't cause any trouble!"

Staring coldly at Zhang Xuan, the lady snickered, "Judging from your appearance, you aren't even twenty years old yet. At your age, I doubt that you can even differentiate among the various herbs. A high-class banquet like this is clearly out of your league, don't try to get ahead of yourself! Study hard and maybe in fifty years or so, you might just get the chance to come in... Hahahahaha!"

Chuckling beneath her hands, the lady straightened her back. Her voluptuous chests looked uncomfortable in her tight dress, and they threatened to break free from their restraints.

"Fifty years?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. Turning to the maid guarding the door, he asked, "Can anyone with the invitation letter enter?"

"Err... That's right!"

The maid contemplated over the prior instruction from her superior and hurriedly nodded her head.

"That's good!"

Hearing the other party's affirmative reply, Zhang Xuan turned to the curvaceous lady and scratched his head sheepishly, "I wish to negotiate with you. Can you lend me your invitation letter?"

"Lend you? Hahaha!"

As though hearing the most hilarious joke in the world, the curvaceous lady burst into laughter. Following which, she stared down at Zhang Xuan with a look of disdain, "Why should I lend it to you? Garden Owner Xue gave this to me, who do you think you are?"

"You refuse?"

Zhang Xuan glanced at the curvaceous lady.

"You'd better scram before I fly into a temper. Otherwise, I swear you will be carried out of here..."

Bellowing furiously, a powerful aura flowed out from her.

Transcendent Mortal 3-dan.

"You intend to kill me?" Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan glanced behind and instructed, "Demon Cinque, negotiate with her in my stead and see if you can borrow the invitation letter from her..."

Roar!

Hearing the order, the Demon Cinque Beast roared deeply and flew over.

"What do you intend to do?"

Before she could react, a humongous shadow appeared before her and a giant backside came crushing down her head.

Putong!

Just like that, she was crushed into the earth. Only her limbs and brain were spared, and she spewed huge mouthfuls of blood.

Ding!

After sitting down on the other party, the Demon Cinque Beast grabbed the invitation letter from the other party's hands with its mouth and threw it to Zhang Xuan.

"..."

Jin Conghai and Zhao Feiwu staggered. Their eyes were about to pop out from their eyes.

Wasn't it supposed to be a negotiation? Why... did it suddenly turn out like that...

Chapter 518

The Depressed Zhang Xuan

To be crushed by that massive Demon Cinque Beast who weighed ten thousand kilograms... Just the thought of it was sufficient to leave the two trembling.

Shaking their head, the duo glanced at the curvaceous lady who was on the verge of fainting in sympathy.

Of all people you could offend, why did you have to offend this fellow?

This Zhang shi may seem to be a pushover, but in truth, he was a troublemaker who feared nothing in the world. Otherwise, he couldn't have possibly charged singlehandedly into the Xuanyuan Kingdom and destroy its entire royal family.

If one were to speak politely with him, he would reply with equal courtesy... But given how you lashed out at him as though a madman, it would be a wonder if he didn't teach you a lesson!

You are already very lucky that he didn't make you acknowledge him as your teacher on the spot!

He even dared to command a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert to acknowledge him as teacher. As for you... Piece of cake!

While the duo was shocked by the sight before them, the lady crushed under the Demon Cinque Beast felt like she was on the verge of going insane.

As a powerful, beautiful, and influential garden owner, countless people vied for her favor. She thought that this fellow was just trying to attract her attention or even flirt with her by asking her for the invitation letter... Yet, he actually sent his spirit beast after her...

Spurting large mouthfuls of blood, the curvaceous lady, Luo Qingyan, was frenzied.

"You... I want to kill you!"

Shrieking furiously, she was just about to gather her strength to push away the massive figure above her when she heard the displeased voice of the young man not too far away.

"Demon Cinque, what's wrong with you? Didn't I tell you to negotiate with her to borrow the invitation letter from her? Which part of borrow don't you understand? Why are you acting on your own whim? Do you still have any respect left for me, your master?"

"Roar?" The Demon Cinque Beast was stunned. Its massive lantern-like eyes blinked in confusion.

Even though it possessed intelligence on par with humans, it still wasn't too well-versed with the language of the humans. Most probably, it mistook Zhang Xuan's 'negotiate' for 'snatch'.

Besides, this fellow was used to being arrogant. It had always snatched whatever he wanted—if it wasn't for that, the Myriad Kingdom Alliance wouldn't have sent so many experts after him.

Even if it had truly interpreted Zhang Xuan's 'negotiate' correctly, how could it have the patience to do so?

"Alright, enough. Stop putting on an act. Since you've made a mistake, you should be punished. You shall remain on that spot for an hour. Without my order, you are not to move at all!"

That young man berated furiously.

Pu... Luo Qingyan's fresh blood spurted out. Her face was filled with tears.

Are you punishing it or me?

You could have gotten it to sit somewhere else, and yet, you ordered it to remain on the spot for an hour... By the time it's done with its punishment, I will have already died...

While she was spurting blood, Zhao Feiwu stepped forward and said, "We're here to buy medicinal herbs. It'll be best if we don't cause any unnecessary trouble..."

"You're right!" The young man nodded his head. Thus, he turned to the maid at the entrance and passed the invitation letter over. "Alright, here's my invitation letter. Can I enter now?"

"..." The maid.

Honestly speaking, she was on the verge of losing her mind as well.

She had seen plenty of arrogant people, but the young man before her topped it all.

The invitation letter should be a proof of the person's standing, identity, and the garden owner's courtesy. Snatching it like that...

Would any sane person do it that way?

More importantly... Even if you wished to do it, you could have done it discreetly where no one was around. If I didn't know about it, I could at least overlook the matter and allow you in.

But... to snatch it right before my eyes, do you really think that I'm blind?

What was even more infuriating was that... even after you're done, you still have the cheek to present the invitation letter to me and innocently ask if you can enter or not...

Enter your head!

Infuriated, her chest puffed up and she was ready to explode at any time.

"No way! How dare you snatch an invitation letter right before my eyes? Unless you kill me, don't even dream of entering..."

Clenching her pearly teeth tightly together, the maid drove her zhenqi, seemingly prepared to prevent Zhang Xuan from entering even if it would cost her life.

"No way?"

The herb garden's dignity mustn't be sullied. Just as she was about to make a move, the young man hesitated for a moment before asking, "Lady, are you ill?"

The maid staggered.

You sure are scum! I didn't allow you to enter and you immediately say that I'm ill... You're the one who is ill, your entire family is ill!

She had never felt so angry before. If she could, she would immediately charge forward to beat that fellow to death. Flicking her wrist, a weapon appeared in her hand. Just as she was about to make a move, the young man's voice sounded once more.

"I see that the Yangbai acupoint on your glabella is slightly red, and the zhenqi flow in the left of your body is a little stifled. If I'm not mistaken, do you suffer from severe headaches every night, and it will feel as though the back of your head is convulsing?"

"You..." The furious maid suddenly froze.

The other party was correct. She did suffer from splitting headaches every night, and it was as if the back of her head was convulsing violently. She had visited the Physician Guild to have it checked but the results were inconclusive. As such, she could only bear with it.

How in the world did this fellow... know about it?

"Not only so, zhenqi doesn't flow through the meridian of your right thigh smoothly, resulting in your strength being imbalanced. As such, your cultivation has reached a bottleneck, and you find yourself being unable to take the final step forward. If I'm not mistaken, you are secretly cultivating an ice-attribute cultivation technique. Am I right?" the other party's voice continued.

"Y-you... How did you know?" The maid was taken aback.

She had found her cultivation coming to a standstill recently. In order to boost her cultivation, she chose to cultivate an ice-attribute cultivation technique. However, she kept this matter a secret and even her bosom buddies were kept in the dark. How did this fellow learn of it?

"It doesn't matter how I know it. You were once injured by the attack of a person who cultivates a yang-attribute cultivation technique, causing a surge of yang energy to clog up your meridians. Your original intention is to cultivate an ice-attribute cultivation technique to neutralize the yang energy so that you can regain your cultivation talent..."

The young man before her shook his head, "Your idea isn't bad, but the method you

used... couldn't be anymore wrong!"

The maid trembled in shock. Her eyes were so huge that they were about to fall to the floors. Her mouth was agape but not a single word could express her emotions at the moment.

She had indeed fought with a person of yang-attribute a year ago, and due to an injury from that battle, her cultivation came to a standstill. As such, she lost the right to cultivate medicinal herbs and was reduced to becoming a doorman.

With his hands behind his back, the young man calmly explained, "Yin and yang do neutralize one another. However, the surge of yang energy in your body has already fused with your blood and meridian. Cultivating an ice-attribute cultivation technique all of the sudden will only turn your body into a battlefield. Of course, with every battle, the yang attribute zhenqi would slowly diminish with each battle. However... the ice-attribute zhenqi would also be scattered throughout your body during the collision, and some of them would flow along with your bloodstream into your head, thus inducing that sharp splitting headache of yours!"

"This..." The maid's lips quivered. "Is there any cure for it?"

The other party's analysis was logical. She had thought that the headache was caused by her fatigue, and never in her dream did she expect that it would be a product from her cultivating an ice-attribute cultivation technique.

Thinking about it, the headache did indeed start from the moment she started cultivating this cultivation technique!

Not only did the other party notice her symptoms, he even found out the cause of the illness, something that even the physicians of the Physician Guild were unable to!

To be able to do so much with a single glance...

Who in the world was this person?

"The treatment method is simple. You just have to practice the Fallen Flower Swordsmanship five times every day while driving your zhenqi. Within ten days, you'll make a complete recovery!" Zhang Xuan said.

"How... did you know that I have learned the Fallen Flower Swordsmanship?" The

maid's body swayed once more.

The Fallen Flower Swordsmanship was imparted to her by Garden Owner Xue, and among her sisters, she was the only one who'd managed to master it. How did the other party manage to discern so much when all she had done was take out her sword...

Was she dreaming?

Crushing Garden Owner Qingyan to the floor, leaving her spewing large mouthfuls of blood on the ground, to steal her invitation letter... Seeing through her illness with a single glance and offering a solution to it on top of that... Was this fellow spouting nonsense or was he serious?

Ignoring the other party's question, the young man continued with an impassive expression, "The Fallen Flower Swordsmanship allows one to create sword qi reminiscent of a fallen flower. If you were to drive your zhenqi while executing this technique, you can drive the yang energy clogged within your body out along with the sword qi. If you were to do it five times a day over a course of ten days, the yang energy should completely dissipate, and there should be no aftereffect even if you were to continue cultivating the ice-attribute cultivation technique!"

Hearing that the treatment method was that simple, the maid hesitated for a moment before gritting her teeth. Lifting the sword in her hand, she began doing as the other party instructed.

The Fallen Flower Swordsmanship created zhenqi reminiscent of fallen flowers. In an instant, a paradise filled with falling petals seemed to have appeared before everyone's eyes. However, each of these petals carried an extraordinarily sharp and cold aura, creating a sight of desolate beauty.

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel awed as he watched the swordsmanship. As expected of the Myriad Kingdom City. Even a maid guarding the entrance was at Half-Transcension.

Soon, the maid finished the entire sword routine. Sensing the changes in her body, she widened her eyes in astonishment and delight.

It was just the first time, but her body already felt much more comfortable. The yang energy which she'd thought she would never be able to rid of had indeed dissipated

by a little. Even though there was still a significant amount of it left in her meridian, at the very least... this meant that what the other party had said was true!

Her affliction could really be treated by this method!

"Thank you for your guidance!" Sheathing her sword, the maid clasped her fists politely.

At this moment, her anger had already vanished completely.

To be able to see through the problem in her cultivation and allocate a treatment method to it, the other party's means were even more incredible than the physicians of the Physician Guild... Without a doubt, the person before her was anything but simple.

A person of his caliber couldn't possibly come here just to cause trouble!

"Un!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands nonchalantly. The other party's problem wasn't too complicated so it didn't take too much trouble. Chuckling softly, he spoke with a refined tone, "May I enter now?"

"This... May I know who gongzi is..." The maid couldn't help but ask.

Even though she knew that the other party was a formidable figure, she still had to enquire on his identity first. Otherwise, she couldn't account for his entry to the garden owner.

"This is Zhang shi!" Jin Conghai stepped forward and replied.

"Zhang shi? You're... a master teacher?" The maid was taken aback.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

Even if I am a master teacher, surely you need not be so surprised. After all, there is a huge bunch of master teachers in Myriad Kingdom City.

"If only I knew that you are a master teacher, I won't have blocked your path. For the banquet tonight, the garden owner has declared that on top of the other garden owners... all master teachers are allowed to enter the premises of the herb garden freely..." the maid said.

"Master teachers can enter freely?" Zhang Xuan's body swayed and his vision went dark.

What in the world was this!

If only he knew that it was that simple, he wouldn't have gotten the Demon Cinque Beast to make a move. Just to enter this herb garden, he went through so much trouble... only to realize that his efforts were meaningless...

"Zhang shi, this way please!" After confirming the other party's identity, the maid immediately gestured the young man in.

"Un..." Suppressing his frustration, Zhang Xuan proceeded into the garden along with Zhao Feiwu and Jin Conghai. However, barely after taking two steps, he saw the maid pointing to Luo Qingyan, who was still crushed under the Demon Cinque Beast. "Zhang shi, what about Garden Owner Qingyan..."

"Oh. Go and rest by the side first, I'll call you later on!"

Knowing the other party's intention, Zhang Xuan waved the Demon Cinque Beast away.

Even though it was an accident that the Demon Cinque Beast had misunderstood his intentions, that lady had it coming. Since she dared to disrespect a master teacher, she should have been ready to be punished.

Roar!

Hearing the command, the Demon Cinque Beast nodded. Shaking its giant backside, it spread its wings and soared into the sky.

"Damn it! Damn it..."

With her squashed body, Luo Qingyan stared hatefully at the departing backs of Zhang Xuan and the others. Her body trembled and she gritted her teeth in resentment.

As the garden owner of Greenmist Herb Garden, her standing was on par with the nobility of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. When had she suffered such injustice?

To be sat on by a spirit beast... This was an insult!

Even if the other party was a master teacher, she refused to simply let this matter go.

"Garden Owner Qingyan, what's wrong?"

Just as she swore to exact vengeance on that hateful young man, a surprised voice suddenly sounded. Following which, a young man donning a master teacher emblem with four shining stars on top walked over.

Chapter 519

Herbologist Clans

That young man was actually... a 4-star master teacher!

"Luo Qingyan pays respect to Song shi!"

Upon seeing the young man, Luo Qingyan hurriedly clasped her fist respectfully.

If Zhang Xuan was here, he would surely recognize the other party as the man who'd bought the Soulless Metal Humanoid from him in Honghai City.

"Garden Owner Qingyan, this..." Seeing the beautiful and proud garden owner covered with mud from head to toe, Song Chao muttered doubtfully.

After receiving the Soulless Metal Humanoid, he immediately returned back to the Myriad Kingdom City. Recalling the guidance of Zhang shi, he immediately visited all the herb gardens to buy the necessary herbs. It was because of this that he'd met this garden owner several times.

The other party's beauty had bewitched him, leaving him burning in desire. Upon seeing the other party in such an unkempt state, he couldn't help but feel puzzled.

"Song shi, I beseech you to save me!"

Luo Qingyan's eyes shone as she recalled something. She immediately put on a tearful face that seemed as though she was going to kowtow to the other party at any moment just so that he would stand up for her.

"Save you? What's wrong?" Raising his hand to stop the other party, Song Chao asked doubtfully.

"Someone tried to barge into the herb garden earlier, and knowing that Garden Owner Xue disliked strangers disturbing her, I stopped him. Who knew that... the other party would actually send his tamed beast after me!"

At this moment, Luo Qingyan seemed nothing more than a pitiful weak lady. "Song shi, I really didn't know that he's a master teacher. If only I knew earlier, I surely wouldn't have stopped him..."

"Just because you stopped him, the other party sent his tamed beast after you?" Song Chao frowned.

"Actually, it's not that master teacher's fault. Even though he isn't wearing a master teacher robe and he didn't indicate his identity, I should have been asked him about it beforehand... Song shi, I won't do it again. Save me..." Luo Qingyan cried.

Even though she seemed to be regretful of her actions, she was actually playing down her disrespect and emphasizing on the other party's domineering nature instead.

This way, she made it seem as though Zhang Xuan was the one who was unreasonable. Not only did he not flash his identity, he even injured a person who was just acting within her scope of responsibility.

"Atrocious! How dare a master teacher act in such a manner... This cannot be overlooked!"

As expected, after hearing Luo Qingyan's distorted version of the story, Song Chao's face darkened.

Master teachers were a representation of the Master Teacher Pavilion. As such, wherever they went, they had to make sure to act in a manner appropriate for their identity. How could the other party act so domineeringly as though he was a hoodlum?

"Don't worry. The blame is not on you for this matter. When I see that fellow later on, I'll make sure to teach him a lesson. I'll drill the idea of respect into him and have him apologize to you!"

Song Chao waved his hands grandly.

How could a master teacher beat someone who was just doing her responsibility? This was something that only a tyrant would do!

"Thank you, Song shi!" Seeing that the other party was going to stand up for her, Luo Qingyan's eyes glowed in excitement. She turned to look at the young man in admiration.

Did you see that? This is the might of a 4-star master teacher!

Only a person of his level would dare to teach other master teachers a lesson!

Humph, you sure acted arrogantly back then, having your tamed beast to sit on me. Let's see how you fare before Song shi!

In her view, given how the other party wasn't even twenty yet and his cultivation was clearly beneath hers, even if he was a master teacher, he would be at most 3-star only. Before a 4-star master teacher, he would still have to bend his back and act obediently!

"Song shi, I'll take you to him now!"

The more she thought about it, the more excited she felt. Thus, she offered to lead the way.

"Un!" Nodding his head, Song Chao placed his hands behind his back and followed Luo Qingyan.

...

Under the lead of the maid, Zhang Xuan and group walked through a long corridor and arrived at a grand hall.

At this moment, quite a large crowd had already gathered here. Taking a brief look, there were at least a hundred people here.

The banquet hadn't even started but the guests were already gathering in groups, discussing something.

"Zhang shi, this is the banquet venue. The garden owner will be arriving soon to welcome all of you. I'll be leaving now then!"

Nodding her head, the maid took her leave.

If her impression of the young man before was reckless, arrogant, and a braggart, after the other party offered a solution to her affliction, all of these negative emotions turned into admiration, and the other party became her idol.

"Un!" Knowing that the maid had to return to guard the entrance, Zhang Xuan waved

his hands and proceeded into depths of the hall.

"Garden Owner Xue usually doesn't allow us into her herb garden, why would she suddenly invite all of us over? Did something happen? This banquet can't be as simple as it looks!"

"Don't you know?"

"I've been outside during the past few days and I only returned to Myriad Kingdom City today. I rushed here as soon as I saw the invitation letter so how could I know what is going on?"

"Rumors have it that the herb garden's Centerpiece is severely ill, and it is on the verge of death. The banquet is just a cover. In truth, what she hopes to achieve is to bring all of us garden owners together to think of a solution!"

"Centerpiece? You mean that..."

"Shhh, lower down your volume! This is all that I heard from my sources. As for what exactly happened, I don't have a clue either!"

"Since that's the case, why is she being so secretive about it? To even go to the extent of using a banquet as a cover..."

"That I'm not too sure as well. It's not like you are unaware of Garden Owner Xue's eccentric temper. She must have her own reasons for doing so..."

"That's true!"

Amidst the crowd, the lowered voice of a trio sounded.

"Centerpiece? Could that be..." Zhao Feiwu's eyebrows suddenly shot up.

"You know about it?" Seeing that the other party seemed to have thought of something, Zhang Xuan immediately turned his gaze to her.

"I've once read a book concerning herb gardens so I know a thing or two about it!" Zhao Feiwu nodded her head. Suppressing her voice, she continued, "They should be referring to the 'Earth Vein Spirit Vine'!"

"Earth Vein Spirit Vine?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

Even though he had read a considerable number of books, he had never come into contact with information regarding herb gardens. As such, he found the name extremely foreign.

"Un!" Zhao Wufei nodded her head. "It's not really a secret. All herb gardens would have this. The Earth Vein Spirit Vine is a unique that grows by aligning itself with earth veins, absorbing spiritual energy, minerals, and water from it... Then, it uses all of these to nourish the ground, thus creating a superior field suited for growing all kinds of medicinal herbs."

If one were to release their cattle at the same location, no matter how lush and concentrated the grass was, it was just a matter of time before it all disappeared. Medicinal herbs were the same as well.

It was still fine to grow a medicinal herb in one location, but if one were to try to grow multiple medicinal herbs on the same field, the herbs would start competing for nutrients... And this would sap the field dry swiftly. Without nutrients to sustain the medicinal herbs, no matter how formidable the herb was, it would wither swiftly.

The reason why herb gardens could supply a steady source of medicinal herbs without fail was due to the existence of this thing.

Its decline and death meant that the entire herb garden was doomed. All of the medicinal herbs in the field would be ruined.

"Medicinal herbs growing on a field nourished by the Earth Vein Spirit Vine have a much more beautiful tone and significantly larger size. More importantly, its rate of maturity would be much faster as well. Some of the legendary five-hundred-year-old herbs could reach maturity here in just two hundred years. Otherwise, who could live for five hundred years just to grow a single medicinal herb?" Zhao Feiwu said.

"I see!"

Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

He had been puzzled by how medicinal herbs could be grown in large groups without any adverse effect. After all, unlike normal grains, they required a huge quantity of spiritual energy and nutrients. No matter how fertile the ground was, it was very

difficult to sustain such massive output.

It turned out that it was due to the credit of this mystical plant.

"If they are really talking about the Earth Vein Spirit Vine, then it's no wonder why Garden Owner Xue is panicking. Without the Earth Vein Spirit Vine to condition the field, given how the medicinal herbs were grown in proximity to one another, they would all surely shrivel swiftly..." Zhao Feiwu continued.

The Earth Vein Spirit Vine was like a formation providing the required conditions for the spirit herbs' survival. Once it died, their source of nutrition would be stopped and they would shrivel swiftly.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded. Just as he was about to speak, a friendly voice suddenly sounded not too far away.

"Brother, did you follow your elders here to participate in the banquet as well?"

The one speaking was an amiable-looking young man. Two dimples would appear on his face when he smiled, and this seemed to make him more approachable.

"Elder?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"That's right. The only ones who are privileged to receive the invitation letters are the garden owners, herb kings, and the herbologist clans. I have met the eight herb owners and seven herb kings of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, and you clearly aren't any of them. Naturally, you must be here with your elder!"

The young man grinned.

"Herbologist clans?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

He knew of garden owners and herb kings, but what in the world were herbologist clans?

"You don't know of herbologist clans?" Seeing the other party's perplexed expression, the young man widened his eyes in disbelief.

This was part of the fundamental knowledge of herb gardens. To not even know this, how in the world did the other party manage to get in here?

"The cultivation of medicinal herbs require the care of specialist, and herbologist clans like us provide such manpower to the herb gardens," the young man explained.

There were farmers to care for the fields and shepherds to care for the herds... Similarly, there were herbologists to care for medicinal herbs.

The high tier a medicinal herb was, the harder it was to cultivate it. Similar to pill forging, it was an extremely profound knowledge. To cultivate a formidable herb, not only would one require time, more importantly, one would also require skilled and experienced workers!

The medicinal herb being unable to live up to its full potential was one thing. In the worst-case scenario, an error made could even cause the plant to wither and die!

Using the spirit herb [Noble Grass] as example, this herb needed to be watered by maidens to live. If the maiden were to get into a relationship with a male, as soon as a drop of water from her were to fall onto the spirit herb, the herb would immediately dissipate into a cloud of smoke.

It was exactly due to this nature of Noble Grass that it was used to check whether a lady was still a maiden or not.

Melody Rapture Grass—It would take on an appearance similar to a human's eye once it flowers. To keep it alive, a person had to dance and sing to delight it with a melody. Otherwise, it would die very quickly.

There were many of such bizarre medicinal herbs throughout the world, and without the required knowledge, it would be impossible to grow them.

And this knowledge was passed down only within the herbologist clans who devoted their entire lives to raising herbs.

Back then, when the Master Teacher Pavilion was organizing the occupations, herbologists had been raised in the discussion. However, this occupation had a very divided heritage and there wasn't any clear school. On top of that, it had very little to do with cultivation and skills, being a knowledge-oriented occupation.

As such, it failed to be ranked within the Nine Paths. Otherwise, its name would surely be listed amidst the occupations of the Lower Nine Paths.

Chapter 520

Impossible to Guard Against

"I am just taking a look around, I didn't come with anyone!"

Understanding what was going on, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Just taking a look around?" The young man was taken aback.

Where were they?

The herb garden of Garden Owner Xue! Even an envoy of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance would find it hard to come in here. To be casually taking a look around here... You must be jesting!

He had seen the fellow come in earlier—the maid guarding the entrance had escorted him personally here, and her attitude was exceptionally respectful... Even his grandfather didn't enjoy such a privilege!

This was precisely the reason why he stepped forward in the hope of making friends. Otherwise, as the successor to a herbologist clan, he didn't have the time to be chatting everyone up.

Thinking that the other party was just trying to keep a low profile, he decided not to ask any further. Smiling, he introduced himself, "I am Lu Zhan, a member of Myriad Kingdom City's Lu Clan!"

"Zhang Xuan!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"So, it's Brother Zhang, nice to meet you!" Despite reporting the Lu Clan's name, the other party's expression remained unchanged. Lu Zhan's complexion immediately turned grave, and he hurriedly clasped his fist respectfully.

As one of the Four Great Clans of the Myriad Kingdom City, the Lu Clan's power and standing was known throughout the entire alliance.

Even nobles and powerful officials would have to respectfully address him as Lu gongzi upon hearing of his identity. Yet, this fellow remained unmoved. It seemed like he must have a huge backing.

Thinking so, his attitude became even more respectful.

If he were to know that Zhang Xuan had simply never heard of the Lu Clan, it was hard to say whether he would puke blood or faint on the spot.

After chatting a moment longer, Lu Zhan realized that the person before him truly knew nothing about medicinal herbs at all, and his confusion deepened.

Other people were still guessing the reason behind Garden Owner Xue's invitation, but as the successor to a prestigious herbologist clan, he had already received concrete news about the matter.

After all, many of the herbologist maids serving in this herb garden came from their clan. It wasn't a problem for them to gather some information.

Just as everyone had guessed, a problem had cropped up with the Earth Vein Spirit Vine!

This was precisely the reason why all those who were invited were the greatest minds in the topic of herbology. Yet, this fellow actually knew nothing at all. He had never even heard of herbologist clans... What exactly was his true identity for Garden Owner Xue to invite him over?

...

While they were chatting, Luo Qingyan and Song Chao arrived at the hall.

"Song shi, that's the fellow who laid his hands on me!" Scanning the crowd, Luo Qingyan soon saw that hateful fellow and pointed him out.

Following the other party's finger, Song Chao soon saw a figure.

Zhang Xuan was currently speaking to Lu Zhan, and his back was against them. Thus, Song Chao only saw the other party's back view. Even though it seemed weirdly familiar to him, he didn't connect it to Zhang Xuan.

After all, Zhang shi seemed extremely close to Hall Master Sai of Honghai City back then, and so, Song Chao thought that the other party was from Honghai City. Why would someone from Honghai City suddenly appear here, and not to mention, how much of a coincidence would it be for the two of them to appear in the same herb garden?

"There's no mistake, it is him! He is the one who abused his identity as a master teacher to attack me! Song shi, please redress my grievance. As long as you teach him a lesson in my stead, I, Qingyan... shall be yours!"

Luo Qingyan cuddled up with Song Chao with her voluptuous chests.

She knew what men liked, and using her charms, she had always been able to convince them to help her. Otherwise, how could a young lady like her possibly open up a herb garden in Myriad Kingdom City?

Feeling the astonishing buoyancy pressing against his arm, Song Chao immediately nodded his head and declared righteously, "Don't worry, even if you didn't say a thing, I wouldn't allow a person who sullied the name of master teachers to get away scot-free!"

Even though he knew that the other party was just making use of him for vengeance, he didn't feel put off by it. In the first place, it was his duty to safeguard the honor and prestige of the Master Teacher Pavilion, not to mention, such a beautiful lady was asking for his help.

Following behind that curvaceous figure, they soon arrived before Zhang Xuan and group.

"We meet once again!"

Knowing that the 4-star Song shi would get back at Zhang Xuan for her, Luo Qingyan was fearless. Stepping forward, she sneered coldly.

Zhang Xuan turned around and froze for a moment. Blinking his eyes, he asked doubtfully, "I thought you don't have an invitation letter? How did you enter the venue?"

"You..."

Hearing those words, Luo Qingyan nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

You still have the cheek to ask if I have an invitation letter or not...

You're the one who snatch it away from me, okay?!

"I've entered by tagging along with Song shi!"

Suppressing her rage, Luo Qingyan turned to Song shi and said, "It's this Zhang shi who abandoned his honor as a master teacher and ordered his tamed beast to attack me. I beseech Song shi to redress my grievance!"

However, Song shi remained completely motionless. Luo Qingyan frowned. Just as she was about to further provoke him into action, Zhang shi's voice sounded, "Song shi? Oh! It's Little Song!"

"Little Song?"

Luo Qingyan was stunned for a moment before frenzied joy gushed through her heart.

This was a genius 4-star master teacher, an expert that came from a neighboring sect!

Even the elders of Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion would have to regard him as their peer, and yet, a young brat like you dares to address him as Little Song...

Luo Qingyan had been thinking of how she should further fan the flames between the two young men but from the looks of it now, there was no need for it. The other party had simply courted his own death!

Not only her, even Lu Zhan who had been trying to fathom Zhang Xuan's identity nearly keeled over.

There were four stars on the emblem pinned on the chest of this Song shi—4-star master teacher. To address the other party as Little Song as though he was a junior...

Lu Zhan hurriedly turned over to Song shi in hopes of mediating the situation when the face of the genius suddenly distorted, and he looked as though he was going to cry at any moment now.

"Rookie Song Chao pays respect to Zhang shi!"

At this moment, he could feel his heart crumbling.

Even if the other party was a 4-star master teacher, he would have challenged the other party on his actions. But before this fellow... How could he dare to do so?

Having been beguiled by the other party's Impartation of Heaven's Will twice consecutively, his fortune had already run dry... Having experienced the other party's astonishing means personally in the past, if not in consideration for his pride and honor, he would have already run away straight upon seeing Zhang Xuan's face.

Teach him a lesson... Even if someone were to give him ten guts, he wouldn't dare to do it!

"Song shi, he's being disrespectful to you! Why are... Huh?"

Luo Qingyan was still immersed in the vision of Zhang Xuan being pummeled violently by Song shi, and she was just about to introduce some punishment methods to the latter when she suddenly realized what Song shi said and froze.

What did 'rookie' mean?

It reflected one's ineptitude!

Usually, only when juniors met with someone superior to them would they use such an address. This genius, a 4-star master teacher, was actually using this address with Zhang shi?

Could it be that... this Zhang shi, despite his young age, was even more incredible than Song shi?

Are you for real?

Luo Qingyan was about to burst into tears.

She thought that a huge figure like Song shi would surely be able to teach that arrogant fellow a lesson so that she could get back at him. Who knew that... the other party's backing was even bigger!

Despite coming here to return the humiliation, she found herself being humiliated instead...

What in the world was this!

Lu Zhan's mouth also widened in shock. His eyes grew even bigger than that of a goldfish.

He had been trying to guess this person's identity all along, and he had even thought of the Alliance Head Residence. But one thing he never imagined was that the other party would be a master teacher... Not to mention, a master teacher who could make a 4-star master teacher address himself as a 'rookie' willingly!

This was too fearsome!

It was no wonder why a maid escorted him personally. He did possess the qualification for such treatment!

Ignoring the shocked duo, Zhang Xuan turned to Song Chao and asked, "Little Song, you wish to redress her grievance?"

Initially, when he saw this fellow, he was a little surprised. However, he soon realized why the other party was here as well.

In the treatment formula that he gave the other party, there were some medicinal herbs that needed to be fresh, and the only place to procure them was at the herb gardens. Most probably, he was here for that purpose.

"N-no... I just happened to meet with her. I don't know her at all..."

Song Chao smiled awkwardly.

Having fallen under the other party's Impartation of Heaven's Will twice, he knew that the other party was a master teacher who was far superior to him. Before such a figure, how could he possibly dare pull his weight?

"You don't know her?" Zhang Xuan lifted his finger and pointed.

Only then did Song Chao realize that Luo Qingyan's voluptuous chest was still pressing against his arm.

"I really don't know her at all..."

Shocked, Song Chao hurriedly jerked his arm and pushed the latter away.

The comfortable buoyant sensation from before felt like needle pricks at this instant, pricking him to the point that tears were threatening to spill from his eyes.

"Song shi..."

Being pushed away, Luo Qingyan finally realized that the formidable Song shi wasn't just respectful toward Zhang shi. Rather, he was fearful of the other party!

A person capable of inducing fear in a 4-star master teacher?

What exactly was the other party's identity?

Terrified, Luo Qingyan slowly backed away. At this instant, vengeance was the last thing in her mind. All that she could think of was how she could get away.

She really felt like slapping the previous her at this moment. Why in the world was the latter so blind as to provoke a person of such standing? It was already huge blessing that she was still breathing at the moment!

"Alright, I get it. There's no need for you to act like that!"

Ignoring Luo Qingyan, who was preparing to escape, Zhang Xuan waved his hands nonchalantly. Then, something suddenly struck him and his eyes lit up. Turning to Song Chao, he said, "Right, do you need more Soulless Metal Humanoids?"

Previously, at the soul oracle tomb, Sun Qiang had taken four grade-7 Metal Coffins, and of which, one of them was empty and the remaining three were filled with Soulless Metal Humanoids. In any case, since those things were meaningless to him and a wealthy potential buyer was before him, he decided to try his luck.

"Soulless Metal Humanoid... Zhang shi still has more of them?" Song Chao asked.

"I still have three more. On top of that, I have the coffins which they are stored in as well. If you're interested, I can sell the coffin together with it and give you a discount. Five middle-tier spirit stones for one set!" Zhang Xuan said.

Previously, he'd sold the Soulless Metal Humanoid to the other party for forty-thousand low-tier spirit stones. This time, the coffin was thrown into the mix as well but the price was only 5 middle-tier spirit stones. There was indeed a significant discount in the price.

"Five middle-tier spirit stones?" Song Chao's lips twitched. "I don't have that many middle-tier spirit stones..."

His entire fortune had run dry from purchasing the Soulless Metal Humanoid from before. Even though he had recouped his losses by reporting the expense to the elders of his sect after returning to the Myriad Kingdom City, that was all in terms of low-tier spirit stones... Even if he were to strip himself bare, he could only produce one middle-tier spirit stone!

Furthermore, that was a reward for obtaining the Soulless Metal Humanoid.

"Then, how much do you have?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"One..." Song Chao replied honestly.

"That works as well. I'll sell you one grade-7 Metal Coffin then. This is a work from a 4-star blacksmith. It can serve as a comfortable bed which will cool you down in summer and warm you up in winter! More importantly, it's a set with the Soulless Metal Humanoid you bought previously. If you were to return with it and study it thoroughly, you might be able to make a breakthrough in your soul cultivation!"

Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and passed a storage ring over.

Storage rings were already worthless to him now, and he had several of them on him. In this storage ring was the coffin storing the Soulless Metal Humanoid which Luo Zhu stole previously.

Zhang Xuan had already gained a deep understanding of soul oracles via Mo Hunsheng and so, these coffins and Soulless Metal Humanoids served little purpose to him. It would be best if he could trade them for something more practical.

"Grade-7 Metal Coffin?" Grabbing the ring, Song Chao immediately dripped a droplet of blood on it before sending his consciousness into it. After taking a look, his eyes immediately lit up.

There were indeed many symbols commonly used by soul oracles carved on it. If one were to study the Soulless Metal Humanoid alongside the coffin, it could indeed help to augment one's understanding toward souls.

"Alright, I'll take it. Here's your middle-tier spirit stone!"

As he said so, he flicked his wrist and passed a jade box over.

"Un!" Opening a crack in the jade box, Zhang Xuan immediately felt concentrated spiritual energy gushing straight toward him. Knowing that there was a middle-tier spirit stone inside, Zhang Xuan nodded his head in satisfaction and put it in his ring.

"I have another three Soulless Metal Humanoid and the higher grade Crimson Metal Coffin. If you're interested in them, bring more middle-tier spirit stones along with you to look for me! I'll welcome you anytime!"

After receiving the middle-tier spirit stone, the satisfied Zhang Xuan looked at Song Chao as though he was a mobile sack of money.

This fellow was indeed wealthy. Zhang Xuan had profited significantly from the other party.

As expected of a sect member.

"Yes! I'll definitely report the matter to my sect. If there's anything we need, we'll definitely look for you!"

Nodding his head, Song Chao turned around and left. However, right after taking a few steps, he suddenly froze and his complexion darkened. Tears began streaming down his face.

"Shit... I got beguiled again..."

Despite being on his guard, he still fell for the other party's tricks.

He was truly a foe that was impossible to guard against!

Chapter 521

Herb Field

Back then, with a Soul Depth of 12.1, Zhang Xuan was able to 'persuade' the other party easily. Now that his Soul Depth had reached 14.1 and he had undergone a second Celestial Master Teacher acknowledgement, it was no longer an issue for him to do so much.

Even so, Song Chao actually didn't make a loss.

A grade-7 Metal Coffin was an artifact that a 4-star blacksmith specially crafted for housing a Soulless Metal Humanoid. It probably was even more expensive than this when Mo Hunsheng bought it back then.

Depressed, Song Chao was just about to look for Zhang Shi to take back his spirit stone when the room suddenly hushed. A slight air of vitality wafted in the hall.

"Garden Owner Xue arrives!"

Along with the declaration, an elder who looked like she was in her fifties walked into the room. Even though her skin was a little loose and there were signs of age all around her, one could still see hints of a previous beauty in her.

She didn't reveal her cultivation but vaguely, one could feel a powerful aura from her that seemed to nearly match up to the Demon Cinque Beast.

It was no wonder why Alliance Head Zhao was slightly apprehensive of the other party's strength. From the looks of it, his worry was not unfounded.

"I thank everyone here for attending today's banquet!"

Walking into the hall, Garden Owner Xue addressed with a smile.

"Garden Owner Xue, you're being much too polite!"

"How could I dare miss out on a banquet hosted by Garden Owner Xue!"

"We haven't met one another for such a long time anyway. This banquet serves as a platform for us to catch up..."

...

The crowd smiled.

Even though this herb garden wasn't open to the public, everyone knew about the formidable variety and quality of herbs within this garden. Without a doubt, among the eight great herb gardens, this one ranked at the very top.

The same went for Garden Owner Xue's cultivation as well. Even though those were just pleasantries, it also reflected their true thoughts.

"I apologize for calling all of you over so abruptly. Even though I've used the front of a banquet to gather all of you here today, I believe most of you have already guessed my true intentions.

"Even if I don't say anything, everyone here should know the importance of an Earth Vein Spirit Vein to a herb garden. The abrupt changes of the herb garden have caught me off guard, and due to my limited ability, I am unable to find a solution to the problem for the time being. Thus, I gathered everyone here together in hope of borrowing everyone's knowledge to tide me through this crisis. As long as anyone can come up with a solution to the problem, I, Xue Yiyao, hereby swear that they shall be an eternal friend of mine. No matter what medicinal herbs they require in the future, my herb garden shall supply it to them for free!"

"Supply medicinal herbs... for free?"

"Isn't this gift a little, no, way too generous?"

"Garden Owner Xue's medicinal herbs have never been put up for sale before, and as such, there are quite a lot of herbs with the maturity of a century or higher..."

"That's not important. More importantly... If you were to become Garden Owner Xue's friend, given her strength and identity, who would dare trifle with you?"

"That's true..."

...

A huge commotion immediately broke out below.

Everyone's eyes went red in agitation.

Even Lu Zhan's breathing hastened, and his eyes went red in agitation.

Even though the Lu Clan was noted as one of the Four Great Clans of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, it ranked at the very bottom of the four. It was at risk of being pulled down by the competitors below them.

If they could pull Garden Owner Xue to their side, it would just be a matter of time before they climbed to the very top.

Suppressing his excitement, he glanced at the young man he had just met and his admiration for the latter immediately deepened.

Everyone's faces were reddened in excitement and many elders in the room even had veins popping at their temples. Yet, this young man was able to retain his composure despite the massive benefits involved.

Perplexed, Lu Zhan asked, "Brother Zhang, aren't you excited?"

"What is there to be excited about?" Zhang Xuan asked in confusion.

"Being Garden Owner Xue's friend..." Halfway through his words, Lu Zhan suddenly smiled bitterly.

The person before him was a figure who could even command respect from a 4-star master teacher and have the latter identify himself as a 'rookie'. Xue Yiyao might be a formidable figure in the Myriad Kingdom City, but she might still be insufficient to catch the eye of the latter.

Interrupting everyone's excitement, Garden Owner Xue said, "I've already said all that should be said. Those who are interested should follow me to the herb field. We can discuss the solution to the matter after you all see the condition of the Earth Vein Spirit Vine for yourself!"

"Alright, we'll be troubling Garden Owner Xue to lead the way then!"

"Let's see who can solve the problem!"

...

Everyone replied as they followed Garden Owner Xue out.

The herb field in the herb garden was a top-notch field nourished by the Earth Vein Spirit Vine. All medicinal herbs that grew here were much more potent and larger than those growing anywhere else.

Zhang Xuan followed behind the crowd.

Even before seeing the Earth Vein Spirit Vine, Zhang Xuan could already feel the spiritual energy in the air growing more and more concentrated. Vitality seemed to flow in the air itself.

Here, not only were medicinal herbs nourished, even cultivators would feel revitalized.

Activating the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan scanned the surroundings and he couldn't help but frown.

Even though the herb field seemed to be filled with vitality, vaguely, a heavy aura of death seemed to linger in the area.

It was a cold and sinister sensation. If one didn't pay careful attention, it would be easy to overlook it.

"It seems like something has indeed gone wrong with this Earth Vein Spirit Vine!"

Upon seeing this, Zhang Xuan suddenly understood why Garden Owner Xue would gather so many herbologists here and offer such a huge reward.

From the looks of it, the problem surrounding the Earth Vein Spirit Vine was much greater than expected.

Before even reaching the herb field, Zhang Xuan could already sense an aura of death. Wouldn't it be even more apparent when he stands before it?

Judging from the concentration of the aura of death, if the Earth Vein Spirit Vine wasn't treated, it probably wouldn't last past a year.

"So many medicinal herbs... Incredible! Our clan seems nothing in comparison to this..."

"It is no wonder why everyone says that Garden Owner Xue's herb garden is the best across the entire Myriad Kingdom Alliance. I was harboring some doubts beforehand but after seeing this, I have no choice but to admit it!"

"Garden Owner Xue hasn't sold any medicinal herbs for more than fifty years now. The herbs she has in her storage must be incredible!"

Amidst shocked exclams, the crowd arrived at the herb field.

The herb field was several hundred mu large, and it was impossible to see the end with a single glance. All kinds of medicinal herbs were planted in the area, and every single one of them was exuding concentrated spiritual energy. Walking through this area, everyone felt an indescribable feeling of comfort.

(One mu = 666.6 meters square)

"This is the Spiritearth Grass... Reticent Flower... Wild Goldsilver Grass... These are all extremely expensive herbs, and on top of that, there is an extremely limited supply of them outside. For there to be so many of them in here..."

Lu Zhan was so shocked that his mouth could hardly close properly.

The variety of medicinal herbs here was incredible. Many rare herbs that could rarely be seen outside filled the fields, and they came in different shapes and sizes, creating a very unique aesthetics to the area.

"Everyone, this is the centerpiece to my herb garden, the Earth Vein Spirit Vine!"

Walking along a narrow pathway in between the herb field, Garden Owner Xue pointed forward.

Following her finger, everyone saw a massive vine rising up in the center of the herb field. Its trunk was seven to eight meters thick, and branches filled with lush leaves extended from it.

It was the first time that most of the people here were seeing such a massive vine, and they couldn't help but be astounded by its hulking size.

Even so, they swiftly noticed that something was amiss. The leaves on the thick vine were slightly yellowish, and they looked as though they were about to wither to death at any moment.

"This vine seems to be on the verge of death..."

"How did this happen? How could such a huge vine wither?"

"That's weird..."

...

Everyone here was a herbologist who had a deep understanding of medicinal herbs. They couldn't help but be astounded upon seeing such a massive vein being on the verge of death.

"You aren't mistaken. This Earth Vein Spirit Vine is indeed on the verge of death. I've tried many ways to save it but my efforts were futile. Left with no choice, I could only invite everyone else here to brainstorm for a better idea!"

Garden Owner Xue's eyes darkened.

Earth Vein Spirit Vines were the foundation to a herb garden, and if it dies, it won't be long before all of the medicinal herbs wither. By then, the entire herb field would be ruined!"

An elder took a look and remarked, "Since even Garden Owner Xue is helpless before the issue surrounding the Earth Vein Spirit Vine, we probably won't be able to come up with anything good either.

His words received the approval of others as well.

Judging by how Garden Owner Xue was able to cultivate so many superior medicinal herbs, her proficiency in the occupation was definitely extremely high. If even she was helpless before this issue, how could the rest of them possibly solve the problem?

Seeing that the morale was low, an elder spoke up, "You all shouldn't feel discouraged by it. If we put our heads together, we just might be able to find a solution to the problem. After all, this is the main reason why Garden Owner Xue invited us here today!"

"Elder Lu is right!"

"In the end, the strength of an individual is limited. If we work together, we just might be able to solve the problem!"

"We have all dealt with medicinal herbs our entire life, so surely, we would have some secret techniques or nifty tricks of our own. Maybe if we try them all, we just might be able to save the Earth Vein Spirit Vine!"

"As long as it's concerning medicinal herbs, we'll surely be able to find a way out!"

...

Hearing the words of the elder, everyone recovered from their low morale.

The reward that Garden Owner Xue offered this time was too great. No one wanted to give up on such a good opportunity.

They had no idea whether their solution would work or not, but... what if it worked?

"That's my grandfather, the current head of the Lu Clan!"

Seeing how everyone's morale lit up once more just because of a single word from Elder Lu, Lu Zhan immediately turned to Zhang Xuan and explained it to him.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded silently. His eyes were fixated on the vine before him.

The vine was massive, and the length exposed outside already stretched for a height of several hundred meters high. It was unimaginable how deep the vine underground extended.

For such a bizarre plant to exist as well, nature was truly filled with wonders.

Zhang Xuan examined the leaves of the vine carefully with the Eye of Insight.

"That's not right..."

After taking a look, Zhang Xuan frowned.

The Eye of Insight should be capable of determining the current growth stage of the

huge fellow and analyze it based on that. Even though it was inferior to the Library of Heaven's Path, it was more than sufficient to solve most problems.

Logically speaking, given how the leaves of the tree were yellow and it was on the verge of death, the tree must either be ill, infested with worms, or coming to the end of its lifespan... But the Eye of Insight showed that wasn't the case!

In other words... This Earth Vein Spirit Vine was perfectly healthy... but yet, it was plagued with an aura of death. From the looks of it, it wouldn't live past a few more days.

It was as if a fit and healthy man was suddenly too weak to stand up. The situation was truly baffling.

It was no wonder why Garden Owner Xue, despite banning entry to visitors and rejecting sales of medicinal herbs to even the Alliance Head Residence, suddenly gathered all of them here today and made such a generous offer. She must truly have been forced into a corner.

While Zhang Xuan was assessing the Earth Vein Spirit Vine, the others weren't lazing around either.

After assessing the vine, Elder Lu suddenly spoke up.

"Hall Master Xue, you should have a deeper knowledge regarding the details of this Earth Vein Spirit Vine. May I know when the illness struck, what kind of symptoms there are, and what methods you've used to treat it so that we can all analyze the information?"

With just a single look, it was clear that the massive Earth Vein Spirit Vine was ill, and treating a medicinal herb, just like treating a human, required one to understand more about its condition. Only by learning about the cause and symptoms of the illness could one make deductions and decide on the most feasible treatment method.

Chapter 522

Completely Helpless

"Indeed, Garden Owner Xue, you should tell us about it. Otherwise, we'll just be grasping at straws!"

"If we don't know about the situation, we won't be able to do anything about the Earth Vein Spirit Vine's condition. Why don't you tell us about it in greater detail so that we can find a better solution together?"

...

Elder Lu's words immediately had everyone nodding their heads.

For Garden Owner Xue's reward, they decided to give it their best shot.

"Alright then, I'll talk about the condition of the Earth Vein Spirit Vine!"

Knowing that only after she revealed everything would everyone be able to come up with better solutions, Garden Owner Xue didn't reject the request, "The Earth Vein Spirit Vine has always been healthy. Back when it wasn't ill, the vine was completely green, and its leaves were exceptionally lush. It exuded a deep aura of vitality that revitalizes all that approaches it... It was around half a year ago that everything changed!

"Half a year ago, a maid whom I tasked with looking after the herb field reported to me that a slight yellowish shade appeared on the spirit vein. Back then, I didn't believe her words, so I immediately rushed over to take a look. To my astonishment, that was indeed the case! Even so, as most herbologists should know, the color of the leaves changes with the seasons, and thus I didn't pay much heed to it!

"But ten days later, the yellowish shade began to spread. From just a few leaves, it expanded to over half of the tree. By then, I finally realized that something was amiss and immediately tried to treat it!

"Since the leaves had turned yellow, I immediately turned my suspicions to the water

source. After all, the cause of such conditions is frequently due to the water!

"So, I specially fetched the ice water from Tianhan Mountain and watered the vein with it. I thought that the issue with the yellow leaves would alleviate as time passed. But who could've know that a month later, the leaves of the entire spirit vein turned yellow instead, and even the veins within even had started to wither!

"Thus, I panicked. I immediately turned my attention to the soil and after paying a heavy price, I changed the entire field of soil which the vine is absorbing nutrients from. However, there still wasn't any effect whatsoever. Thus, I found myself completely stumped. That's why I invited everyone over to help me on this matter!"

As she spoke, Garden Owner Xue shook her head in despair.

"Yellow leaves and withering veins... Under normal circumstances, it should be a matter of malnourishment or over-nutrition. Has Garden Owner Xue tried tackling these issues yet?" Elder Lu asked.

"I've given it a try already but it's futile!"

Garden Owner Xue shook her head.

"Let me give it a try!"

After hearing the explanation, an elder stepped forward from the crowd.

"It's Elder Liu!"

"Which Elder Liu?"

"Who else in the Myriad Kingdom City dares to call himself Elder Liu? Of course it's Garden Owner Liu of the herb garden in the north of the city!"

"He's here too? The Northern Herb Garden is the second largest herb garden in Myriad Kingdom City!"

"If even he fails, I doubt that there is anything else we can do..."

...

A commotion immediately broke out when everyone saw the elder who volunteered to give it a try.

"This fellow is very famous?"

Zhang Xuan glanced at Lu Zhan doubtfully.

"Cough cough..." Lu Zhan choked on his own saliva. "Brother Zhang, this Elder Liu was already a famous figure in Myriad Kingdom City a hundred years ago. He once served as the Alliance Head Residence's imperial herbologist! In the past, my grandfather often consulted him on many affairs. In terms of qualifications, he is definitely the most senior herbologist in the entire Myriad Kingdom City! It can't be that... you've never ever heard of his name?"

Lu Zhan felt as though he was going mad.

Regardless of whether Zhang Xuan was from the Myriad Kingdom City or not, how could he not know Elder Liu?

One must know that Elder Liu's fame transcended beyond just herbology. Even when just considering his strength, he was still one of the top figures in Myriad Kingdom City.

"Oh!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

"Only an 'oh'?" Lu Zhan nearly spurted blood.

That is Elder Liu! Even Pavilion Master Kang of the Master Teacher Pavilion would speak of him with utmost respect. And yet, you simply reacted nonchalantly with an 'oh'? What the heck do you mean by that? It is as if you had just heard of someone insignificant

Noticing the other party's intent gaze, Zhang Xuan asked, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing!"

Seeing the other party's innocent look, Lu Zhan felt the world spinning around him.

Only then did he realize that the young man wasn't feigning it. He was truly unaware of Elder Liu's standing and identity.

Suppressing his helplessness, he internally decided that he would hold a remedial lesson for Brother Zhang to brush up his knowledge of herbs. However, at that moment, the other party said a few words which left him frenzied once more.

"That old fellow's skill is lacking, he won't be able to cure the Earth Vein Spirit Vine!"

Turning his head, he saw the young man shaking his head in disappointment as he looked at Elder Liu.

Shaking your head? Disappointed?

Lu Zhan felt as though all of his blood was gushing into his chest, and the final thread of sanity that had been keeping him grounded snapped.

What the heck are you disappointed about?! You might be a master teacher, but you clearly know nothing about herbology at all. Elder Liu is a great herbologist well respected by those in the field, and even if he is unable to cure the Earth Vein Spirit Vine, do you have any rights to be disappointed in him?

Not to mention... that tone!

To be speaking of him as though he is your junior... Big brother, where did you come from? Can you not be so arrogant and haughty?

While Lu Zhan was about to faint from insanity, Elder Liu had finally finished circling around the thick vine.

"The soil, water, air, and nutrition are all alright... What is going on?"

Elder Liu frowned in confusion.

Given his deep understanding of medicinal herbs, he was able to gauge whether the quality of soil, water, and such were fine just by looking at them. Those factors that could affect the healthy growth of the vine were all impeccable, and there was nothing to complain about them. Even so, the giant Earth Vein Spirit Vine was still dying. This bizarre situation had left him truly stumped.

After contemplating for a moment, Elder Liu asked, "Garden Owner Xue, could it be that this Earth Vein Spirit Vine has come to the end of its lifespan?"

Garden Owner Xue shook her head.

"End of its lifespan? That's impossible! Earth Vein Spirit Vine can live more than a thousand years, and this spirit vine has only lived for slightly more than a hundred years. How could it have reached the end of its lifespan already?"

She had considered this possibility as well and analyzed the possibility. However, the vine was clearly pulsating with vitality, and the factors indicating that one had reached the end of its lifespan were all missing from the vine.

"Besides, even if its lifespan has reached its limit, it should slowly wither away from its stem. However, the leaves are turning yellow first instead of its veins. Clearly, its lifespan isn't up yet!"

"You're right!"

Hearing the other party's analysis, Elder Liu couldn't help but shake his head, "Pardon my lack of wisdom but I am really unable to find the root of the problem."

"Thank you for your effort, Elder Liu!"

Seeing that Elder Liu was helpless before this matter, Garden Owner Xue's eyes darkened. Even so, she still replied politely.

"I apologize for being of no help!"

Elder Liu backed down and fell into deep thought.

It seemed like this problem had truly left him stumped.

"Even Elder Liu is unable to solve the problem?"

Seeing Elder Liu admit that he was helpless before the matter, Lu Zhan suddenly recalled the young man's words and he widened his eyes in shock.

Did Brother Zhang happen to be right or did he really possess the eye of discernment to gauge that Elder Liu was unable to treat the Earth Vein Spirit Vine?

Wasn't he completely unknowledgeable about herbology?

"Since Elder Liu is unable to do it, I doubt that I can be of help as well. Still, I wish to give it a try!"

Elder Lu stepped forward.

Walking up to the vine, he knocked on several places carefully and tore off a part of the skin to analyze. After pondering for a long moment, he eventually shook his head and backed down, just like Elder Liu.

Having come into contact with medicinal herbs for so many years, they were well-versed with the common illnesses of the herbs. However, they had never seen an illness like that with the Earth Vein Spirit Vine before, and naturally, they were unable to find a solution for it.

After the two most qualified elders failed, a few others stepped forward to give a look and offered some advice, but all of this advice was turned down by Garden Owner Xue.

The ideas they proposed were normal and she had already tried them already, but to no avail.

Two hours later, all of the herbologists and garden owners had already given it a try but were helpless before the situation. There were some of the younger generation who hadn't given it a try yet but most of them were only accompanying their elders to or to expand their horizon. As their level of skill paled to the others, they weren't able to come up with a feasible solution either.

"Does anyone else have any ideas?"

Seeing that no one could solve the problem despite inviting so many herbologists here, Garden Owner Xue's disappointment deepened.

"I can't think of anything else already!"

"Garden Owner Xue has already tested all of the ideas I can think of. This really seems hopeless!"

"Since even Elder Liu, Elder Lu, and Garden Owner Xue are helpless before this matter, how can we come up with a better solution..."

"It's no wonder why Garden Owner Xue is offering such a generous compensation.

Indeed, it won't be easy to win her compensation!"

...

Hearing Garden Owner Xue's words, everyone shook their heads.

Most people had given the Earth Vein Spirit Vine a look but its affliction had surpassed their level of understanding. Even herbologists who had immersed themselves in the art for many years were unable to understand the situation at all, and they were stumped.

"Alright, I've troubled everyone. A banquet is prepared at the hall so do have some food before you leave..."

Seeing that no one else had any idea, Garden Owner Xue shook her head.

Since she'd invited everyone here in the name of a banquet, naturally, she had prepared some delicious food and fine wine.

"I wasn't able to be of help and I feel embarrassed by my powerlessness. I think I shall pass on the banquet..."

"I still have matter at home to attend to, so I'll be leaving first..."

Even though Garden Owner Xue was being hospitable, everyone's complexion didn't seem too well.

But that was to be expected, everyone here was a celebrity among herbologists, and yet, despite putting their heads together, they were unable to even find the cause of the illness. It was no wonder why they felt embarrassed.

"The illness of this Earth Vein Spirit Vine is indeed a little bizarre. It's not a big deal that you aren't able to find its affliction. After all, I'm the same as well. I hope that you all can remain and have your meal before leaving. Also, I happen to have something to ask of you all..."

Seeing the embarrassed expression on everyone's faces, Garden Owner Xue immediately understood what they were thinking and consoled them. Just as she was about to continue speaking, she suddenly froze. "That gongzi over there, what are you doing?"

Hearing her words, everyone immediately turned their gaze over and saw a young man standing before the thick vines. He stretched out his hand and touched it lightly.

After which, he walked around the vine once and went on to touch a few more valuable medicinal herbs before coming to a stop.

"What is he doing?"

Everyone was dumbstruck.

Medicinal herbs needed a unique environment to grow. In fact, there were some medicinal herbs that were exceptionally sensitive and abhor a human's touch. As such, none of the crowd approached the Earth Vein Spirit Vine to touch it.

Even if they did, they were all wearing gloves.

After all, depending on the cultivation technique that the person cultivated, there was a possibility that one's touch might cause some unintended reaction with the medicinal herb, resulting in an unimaginable situation.

There was once a yang attribute expert who touched a yin attribute medicinal herb, and the medicinal herb withered on the spot.

That was also the reason why herbologists cultivated neutral cultivation techniques.

Even all of the herbologists were keeping their distance from the Earth Vein Spirit Vine for fear to exacerbating the situation and yet, this fellow actually dared to sneak forward to touch it without any fear...

What the hell?

Don't you know the basic rules?

Chapter 523

Are You a Pig?

While everyone was dumbstruck, Lu Zhan leaped in shock and nearly fainted on the spot.

Others might not know that young man, but he had been talking to him just a moment ago. Why... in a moment when his attention was elsewhere, the other party began walking casually around the herb garden, touching things randomly?

Even though you know nothing about herbology, you could ask me about it! Even if you don't have any questions to ask, surely you should have noticed that no one is wandering about and deduced something from it.

It's one thing for you to touch the Earth Vein Spirit Vine-that thing is humongous, and it probably won't die even if you slash it with all of your might. However... those spirit medicinal herbs are a huge taboo!

Anxious, Lu Zhan racked his brain to find an excuse for the other party when the latter turned around, clapped his hands, and looked at the crowd nonchalantly.

"Oh, I'm just trying to see if I can find a way to treat this Earth Vein Spirit Vine!"

"Treat?" Lu Zhan spurted blood.

Alright, I know that even a 4-star master teacher is fearful of you. However... after our previous conversation, it couldn't be more clear that you don't know a single thing about herbology. If one can find a solution just by touching a few things here and there, we, herbologists, would have lost our job long ago!

If you're curious, just say it! Why must you spout such an obvious lie?

Can't you see that so many people here are stumped by the issue already?

"What arrogant words!"

"Who do you think you are to be spouting such haughty words here? If it's that easy to treat the Earth Vein Spirit Vine, Elder Liu, Elder Lu, and the others would have long given suggestions. Do you think that a small brat like you has the right to butt in?"

"Where did this fellow come from? Garden Owner Chen, is he one of your men?"

"I don't know him..."

As expected, upon hearing Zhang Xuan's words, a huge uproar was immediately generated.

So many master herbologists were unable to determine the illness at all, what can a fellow like you who hasn't even reached twenty yet possibly notice?

Braggart!

Garden Owner Xue was also taken aback. A frown appeared on her forehead and she looked at Zhang Xuan doubtfully, "Did you uncover anything?"

"I did find something, but... I might require Garden Owner Xue's assistance on this matter," the young man said.

"Assistance? Feel free to speak. As long as it's within my means, I'll do it!" Garden Owner Xue nodded her head.

Even though she shared the same sentiments as the crowd-she didn't think that this young man would be able to accomplish anything-she still wanted to give it a try.

"Good..."

The young man chuckled sheepishly and said, "Can you... execute a punching routine for me?"

"Punching routine?"

Garden Owner Xue was taken aback.

The others in the area were also flabbergasted.

Of all requests, they never thought that he would get Garden Owner Xue to execute a

punching routine!

Aren't we here to look at the Earth Vein Spirit Vine? What are you asking the owner to execute a punching routine for?

Why does it sound like you are fooling with a monkey instead... If you execute a punching routine, I'll give you a peach...

"Audacious! How dare you tease the garden owner?"

"You're courting death!"

Hualala!

Some of the younger herbologists immediately rushed up.

Garden Owner Xue was a famous figure even within the entire Myriad Kingdom City, not to mention, she was the owner of the number one herb garden. To ask her to execute a punching routine all of a sudden... Are you trying to make fun of her?

"Everyone, calm down. There must be some kind of misunderstanding here..."

Lu Zhan hurriedly stepped forward and intervened.

Brother Zhang was a person who was likely to be a 4-star master teacher. Putting everyone else aside, even his grandfather couldn't afford to offend the other party.

A young man harrumphed furiously. "Misunderstanding? What misunderstanding can there be? What does treating the Earth Vein Spirit Vine have to do with getting Garden Owner Xue to execute a punching routine?"

"This..." Lu Zhan was also baffled by that as well. Thus, he turned his sight to Zhang Xuan and asked, "Zhang shi, what is going on..."

"Oh, I have a rough idea of the symptom of the Earth Vein Spirit Vine and I would like to double confirm my conjecture. It'll do as long as Garden Owner Xue executes a punching routine for me," Zhang Xuan said.

After assessing the Earth Vein Spirit Vine with the Eye of Insight for so long, he came to the same conclusion as the crowd-the spirit vein wasn't ill.

Helpless, he chose to step forward and touch it. Through the Library of Heaven's Path, he finally found out what was wrong with the Earth Vein Spirit Vine.

Thus, he continued to touch a few more medicinal herbs and he realized that they were suffering from the same affliction as well.

It was after deducing something from all of this evidence that he decided to make such a request.

"Zhang shi?"

Hearing the address, everyone frowned.

"Yes, Brother Zhang is a master teacher. He must have his own reasons for doing all of this..." Lu Zhan hurriedly said.

"Master teacher?"

Taken aback, all eyes swiftly shot to Zhang Xuan.

Since the other party was a master teacher, in consideration of his identity, he shouldn't spout any nonsense!

Also, it was perfectly normal for a master teacher to ask others to display their cultivation technique to him. Just that... they still couldn't understand what did this have to do with the illness of the Earth Vein Spirit Vine.

"Alright!" Knowing the other party was a master teacher, even though Garden Owner Xue was slightly skeptical at the other party's purpose, she still chose to nod her head.

Driving her zhenqi, her fist lashed out.

Pi pa!

A deafening sonic boom sounded as the air which was compressed by the immense might of her fist exploded. A huge gust of wind blew at the crowd, nearly sending them tumbling into the distance.

Even though it was a punch infused with energy from the environment, it was no simple feat to compress air to the point of forming a sonic boom with just an ordinary

punch. At the very least, most Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle experts were incapable of such.

It was no wonder why the other party was so feared by Alliance Head Zhao. The strength of this Garden Owner Xue was indeed formidable!

"Is this alright?"

After executing her fist, Garden Owner Xue retracted her fist and looked at Zhang Xuan quietly.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan replied, seemingly confirmed something. Then, shaking his head, he looked at Garden Owner Xue with a sympathetic gaze, "I know the problem your Earth Vein Spirit Vine is suffering from! But before that, I would like to ask you..."

Garden Owner Xue and everyone immediately turned their gazes over.

They had examined the Earth Vein Spirit Vine for so long, but they were still unable to tell what was wrong with it. On the other hand, the master teacher before them came to a conclusion just by viewing the garden owner's punching routine...

Are you for real?

Everyone pricked their ears in fear that they would miss out a single word that the young man would say. Following which, they heard a slightly lamenting voice sounded, "Are you... a pig?"

Pu!

Garden Owner Xue's body swayed and she nearly exploded.

"What did you say?"

Hong long!

Her aura suddenly surged as if a spark of flame had ignited a pot of hot oil.

She was a renowned expert of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, the garden owner of the Western Herb Garden. Even a master teacher wasn't permitted to humiliate her like that!

"He said that Garden Owner Xue is a pig?"

"Aren't master teachers known for being reliable and courteous?"

"I've no idea either..."

...

The crowd widened their eyes in shock, and they nearly turned mad.

To insult Garden Owner Xue by calling her a pig, this fellow's guts sure wasn't just extraordinarily big, it was about to break through the heavens!

Lu Zhan also nearly bit his own tongue.

I could mediate the matter regarding you touching the medicinal herbs by explaining that you're a master teacher. But now that you've insulted the garden owner publicly, how do you expect me to clean up your mess?

If only I knew you were such a fiery figure, I would have never approached you...

Now, all he could hope was for Garden Owner Xue not to blame the matter on the Lu Clan as well...

Song Chao, who had followed behind the crowd in hopes of exchanging the coffin back for his middle-tier spirit stone, also froze.

As a 4-star master teacher, his eye of discernment was extraordinary. Even though Garden Owner Xue had only displayed a single move, he could tell that the latter's fighting prowess was impressive. Even the elders of his sect would find it hard to triumph over her!

To say that such an expert was a pig...

Zhang Shi sure dared to shoot his mouth.

There were many different reactions from the crowd, but one thought they shared in common was that the young man before them was a lunatic.

"Allow me to finish my words first!"

Even though Garden Owner Xue was already on the verge of snapping, Zhang Xuan didn't seem worried in the least. Instead, he nonchalantly waved his hands and pointed at the Earth Vein Spirit Vine. "If I'm not mistaken, you often cultivate here, right?"

"That's right!" Garden Owner Xue replied.

However, her rage wasn't placated yet. If it wasn't in consideration of the other party's identity as a master teacher, she would have charged forward and killed the other party with a slap long ago.

Due to the innumerable spirit herbs in the herb field, cultivating here could calm one's mind and make it easier for one to achieve a breakthrough.

"You mean that the issue with the Earth Vein Spirit Vine is related with my cultivation?"

Frowning, Garden Owner Xue harrumphed.

"Not only is it related, it is the root of the problem!" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Let me tell you the true problem with the Earth Vein Spirit Vine. It is not ill, neither is it manifested with bugs, and it definitely isn't at the end of its lifespan... What it is suffering from was loss of spirit and soul!"

"Loss of spirit and soul?"

Everyone was taken aback.

Zhang Xuan explained, "All sentient beings in the world possess spirit, and a spirit herb, just like Spirit-tier weapons, possesses spirit. As the centerpiece of the herb garden, if the Earth Vein Spirit Vine doesn't possess a spirit, how do you think it's able to allocate the required nutrients to each individual medicinal herb accurately?"

Everyone nodded their heads.

Upon reaching Spirit-tier, weapons, tools, and even medicinal herb would gain spirit.

This was how the term 'spirit herb' came about.

It was precisely due to the possession of spirit that they would reject cultivators whose

zhenqi didn't align with them, grow faster upon hearing and seeing melodies and dances that delighted them, and discern whether one was a maiden...

"Without spirit, the Earth Vein Spirit Vine would have lost an important part of itself. Under such circumstances, it is inevitable that it would carry an aura of death."

"A spirit herb losing its spirit is equivalent to a human losing its soul, so I can understand why the Earth Vein Spirit Vine is on the verge of death... But what does it have to do with Garden Owner Xue's cultivation?"

Everyone was perplexed.

Instead of answering the question, Zhang Xuan turned to Garden Owner Xue and said, "If I'm not mistaken, Garden Owner Xue has been stuck in Transcendent Mortal 4-dan Clarifying Turbidity realm for at least seven to eight decades already!"

"Eighty-seven years!" Garden Owner Xue nodded her head.

"Having been stuck in the same realm for eighty-seven years, it would be a lie if one were to say that one is not interested in making a breakthrough! However, Transcendent Mortal 5-dan Consonant Spirit realm is the first difficult hurdle of the 9 dans of the Transcendent Mortal stage. It requires one's soul to be completely harmonized with the surroundings and achieving consonance to accomplish a breakthrough! The reason why Garden Owner Xue has been stuck in the same realm is not due to her lack of talent but that her soul... is damaged!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Y-you... how did you know?" Garden Owner Xue's body abruptly stiffened upon hearing those words.

She was still extremely furious a moment ago, ready to slaughter the fellow before her at any moment. However, upon hearing those words, the zhenqi that she had gathered abruptly dissipated out of shock.

Her soul was indeed damaged. Otherwise, given her talent, she would have long achieved a breakthrough. She wouldn't have been stuck in the same realm for eighty-seven years!

But... this matter was a secret which she had never told anyone about. How in the world did the young man before her learn of it?

"It doesn't matter how I know of that matter! Even though your soul is damaged, you didn't give up like everyone else. Rather, you sought to repair the damage through different means!

"It seemed like you heard rumors that the spirit contained within spirit herbs could heal the damage and so, you created this herb garden and cultivated medicinal herbs. The reason why you refused to sell them is so that you can absorb the spirit contained within them to mend the tear in your soul!

"Your persistence is admirable, but you went down the wrong path right from the start! If the spirit of a medicinal herb could make up for the deficiencies in a human... Wouldn't that mean that anyone and everyone could reach Consonant Spirit realm?"

Zhang Xuan looked at Garden Owner Xue with a look of disappointment. "Despite being a master herbologist; despite living beside spirit herbs for so long, you were unable to see through this fact...

"What else can you be... if not a pig?"

Chapter 524

Treating the Spirit Vine

"I..."

Garden Owner Xue's face flushed red. She wanted to lash out, but she couldn't find a word to say.

As the number one garden owner of Myriad Kingdom City, her level of comprehension toward medicinal herbs was in no way inferior to Elder Liu and Elder Lu, or perhaps, she might even be above them.

This was precisely the reason why no one thought well of the situation after learning that even she was helpless before the problem of the Earth Vein Spirit Vine.

Spirit herb and Spirit tools; even though there was a 'spirit' in their names, they were different from the souls of humans. Even though unique spirit herbs could nourish one's soul, there had never been a case where one could heal one's soul through absorbing the spirit contained within a spirit herb.

The nature of the two were completely different from the start. It was just like how one couldn't expect a tiger to feast on grass like a goat when it's hungry!

"This..."

The crowd was astonished.

Garden Owner Xue was the most knowledgeable herbologist of their group, how could she possibly make such a fundamental error?

It was no wonder why she refused to sell the medicinal herbs which she had nurtured. So, this was the reason!

Since she hoped to heal her wounded soul through the spirit of the medicinal herbs, naturally, the more spirit herbs there were, the more effective the treatment should be.

To a cultivator, there was no price too great to reach the Consonant Spirit realm!

Just that, these were all her deepest secrets... How did this fellow learn of it?

Everyone had examined the situation for so long but they were unable to uncover the problem with the Earth Vein Spirit Vine. It was also completely out of their imagination that Garden Owner Xue would act like this... Just by touching the vine and watching a punching routine from Garden Owner Xue, that young man was actually able to deduce so much...

Could things get any more exaggerated!

Lu Zhan and Song Chao's eyes were also completely widened.

They both knew that Zhang Xuan was a capable master teacher, but they never thought that he would be that formidable.

"When Garden Owner Xue first entered the banquet hall, I had already noticed that something was amiss. Judging from her zhenqi and vitality, she should only be in her early hundreds. It's normal for a woman to value her appearance, and under normal circumstances, she should have never looked that old... Unless there was something causing it!"

Zhang Xuan continued, "Thus, I paid close attention to the punching routine she executed just now. If I'm not mistaken, the fist art used was 'Great Heliacal Punch'. Going by the conventional zhenqi pathway for the technique, one's zhenqi should gush out from the Baixin acupoint. Yet, she deviated slightly such that the zhenqi came out from her Zhangxin acupoint instead.

"As a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan expert, her grasp of cultivation should have already reached an incredible level. As such, there is only one explanation behind this peculiarity... Her Huiming acupoint is damaged, causing her to be unable to discern between the minute differences in her acupoints. Huiming is an acupoint governing one's perception, and it is one of the most important acupoints that determining the wholeness of one's soul. Since it's damaged, naturally, her soul must be damaged as well!

"I believe everyone should have seen the Earth Vein Spirit Vine for themselves. It isn't ill, and it isn't infested with bugs either. Yet, it's withering, and nothing seemed to work on it. At the very start, I also didn't think that it might be due to its spirit being

absorbed until I saw the area where I deduced to be where Garden Owner Xue often cultivates."

At which, Zhang Xuan pointed toward the area where he touched the medicinal herbs previously.

Everyone turned their gazes over. The grass growing in that area was both lush and green, seemingly faring much better than anywhere else in the herb field.

"I believe everyone can see that the grass in that area is growing much better than anywhere else in the herb field. When cultivating, spiritual energy would be drawn into one's surroundings, which would in turn nourish the plants in the area and allow them to grow better. However... take a look at this!"

Stepping forward, Zhang Xuan stretched out his hand toward the grass.

Hu!

The grass seemed to have seen something fearsome and despite the lack of wind, they hurriedly avoided his hand.

"This is just ordinary grass that can be found everywhere. It shouldn't possess any spirit and yet, it is now avoiding my hand on its own accord... From this, it can be deduced that someone has been absorbing spirit from the medicinal herbs, thus granting even ordinary plants like this to possess the ability to avoid harm!"

Chuckling lightly, "With this, it isn't too difficult to deduce the rest!"

"This..."

"As expected of a master teacher, what frightening eye of discernment..."

Hearing the other party's explanation, everyone couldn't help but feel awed.

They had long heard of a master teacher's fearsome discernment ability, and from the looks of it now, they indeed lived up to their name.

With just a punching routine and a field of grass, the other party was able to deduce the entire story... If not for the fact that they were witnessing this situation for themselves, they would have never dared believe this to be possible.

"This..." Song Chao swallowed a mouthful of saliva, and his face turned pale.

The other party's deduction was completely rational, and he couldn't find any problem with it.

While the other party had spoken of it easily, he knew that it was no easy feat to do so. Even a 4-star master teacher like him was incapable of doing the same!

In fact, even his teacher and the elders of his sect couldn't possibly tell so much with just a glance.

To uncover the root of the problem through examining insignificant details like this... Linking up all of the evidences to put together a whole picture... Not to mention, they had to fit together perfectly... Was this fellow actually a seer?

Even a 5-star master teacher should be incapable of doing so!

Or... could the fellow before him actually be a 5-star master teacher?

That would explain why he fell for the other party's Impartation of Heaven's Will easily! Only now did he realize that there was a huge gap between him and this Zhang Xuan!

Song Chao was depressed.

"It seems like it'll be impossible for me to take back my middle-tier spirit stone. If I were really to ask him for it, I might even lose those low-tier spirit stones of mine..."

He was beguiled every single time he tried to approach the other party. He was afraid that not only would he fail to get back his middle-tier spirit stone, all of the fortune that he had raked up with great difficulty might even be swiped clean.

"Forget it, I should just bring this coffin back. Perhaps, if the elder is happy with this, I might be able to recoup my losses..."

Zhang Xuan's means had truly left Song Chao terrified.

But at the same time, he was also earnestly impressed by the other party as well.

To be able to deduce the entire situation with just a few minor clues, as expected of a

master teacher who could beguile him.

...

While everyone was overwhelmed by shock, Garden Owner Xue's body was trembling violently in disbelief, "I found that method in an ancient book, and throughout the years, the damage on my soul has indeed alleviated a bit..."

Back then, when her soul was injured, she was doomed to be unable to reach Consonant Spirit realm in her entire life.

However, she didn't believe it, and after flipping through innumerable ancient texts, she finally found the method of absorbing spirit from medicinal herbs to nourish her own soul...

Even though she carried her doubts to the feasibility of the solution, she had no other better alternatives.

Besides, after years of hard work, her damaged soul had indeed recovered to a small extent.

"Alleviated a bit?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Aren't you still very far from making a full recovery? Do you think that you can live for another eighty years?"

Garden Owner Xue's body trembled.

There was a limit to the lifespan of a Transcendent Mortal expert. Being beyond hundred, she had already lived half of her lifespan. At the rate which she was recovering at, could her soul possibly make a full recovery before she comes to an end of her lifespan?

Even if it did, what use would it be when she was already knocking on death's door?

Then... what was the use of it in the first place?

"I was wrong..."

All along, Garden Owner Xue had been thinking of how she could heal her own soul and attempt to break into the Consonant Spirit realm. However, at this moment, she finally realized that it was nothing more than a pipe dream.

Consonant Spirit realm was destined to be beyond her reach.

Shaking her head, she seemed to have suddenly aged decade in an instant.

Seeing her state, even though everyone felt sympathy, they couldn't find any suitable words to console her.

She had driven herself with this faith for eighty years, and yet, her bubble was burst in an instant. No one could take such a blow lightly.

After a long period of time, Garden Owner Xue finally pulled herself together and asked the young man before her, "Zhang shi, is there any way to save this Earth Vein Spirit Vine?"

Since the other party was able to determine the problem with a glance, perhaps he might have a solution for the problem.

Since her fate was sealed, she decided not to struggle any longer. However, this herb garden had accompanied her for more than half of her life. She didn't want to see it destroyed just like that.

"As you have cultivated here frequently over many years, this vine is nothing more than an empty shell now. It'll be difficult to revert it back to its original state! However, I do have a solution in mind, but it will be expensive!" Zhang Xuan said.

If it was before the trip to the soul oracle tomb, given his limited understanding of souls then, it would indeed be difficult for him to deal with such a problem.

However, after attaining Mo Hunsheng's lifetime worth of knowledge and comprehension, his understanding toward souls had reached an extremely profound level. Even though the Earth Vein Spirit Vine was on the verge of dying, he was still able to treat it. Just that, it might take a little more effort.

Upon hearing that there was hope, Garden Owner Xue hurriedly said in agitation, "As long as you can save it, I'm willing to pay any price!"

Everyone else also turned their gazes over.

Even expert herbologists like them had never heard that a spirit herb losing its spirit could be treated. Thus, they were intent to learn a thing or two from this.

"The solution is actually quite simple... grafting!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Grafting?"

Everyone was perplexed.

As herbologists, the term 'grafting' wasn't foreign to them. It consisted of implanting a bud onto the stem of another plant to form a whole plant.

Many new spirit herbs were created through this mean.

"That's right. Plants can be grafted, spirits are the same as well!"

Zhang Xuan chuckled lightly, "As long as you can find another Earth Vein Spirit Vine bud with intact spirit and graft it to this spirit vein, over time, the spirit of the bud will fuse together with the original Earth Vein Spirit Vine, thus forming one entity.

If the grafting succeeded, the two plants would become one, and the spirit of the original Earth Vein Spirit Vine would be replenished.

"However... Given the normal rate of growth of Earth Vein Spirit Vines, it'll be hard to succeed without decades passing. By then, all of the medicinal herbs in your herb garden would have long died... Thus, the growth of the Earth Vein Spirit Vine must be hastened, and the price of doing so will be extremely heavy!"

The concept of grafting was simple in theory, but it was terribly difficult in practice.

Firstly, the implantation of the spirit from the bud onto the Earth Vein Spirit Vine would already require the ability of a soul oracle, thus making it out of question for almost all herbologists.

Also, during the fusing process, one had to ensure that the original Earth Vein Spirit Vine would not reject the bud.

In truth, this grafting was no different from possession. Even though the original Earth Vein Spirit Vine was empty at the moment, it would still be difficult for the immature spirit of a bud to possess the body of such a huge vein.

It was just like an ant trying to pull a carriage.

And the price for hastening the growth of the spirit would be extremely hefty.

"What do you need? I'll prepare it all now!" Garden Owner Xue gritted her teeth.

If the Earth Vein Spirit Vine were to die, all of the medicinal herbs in the herb garden would die. Her loss would only be greater then.

"An Earth Vein Spirit Vine bud, fifty medicinal herbs with at least a hundred years of maturity, ten buckets of Stemless Water..." Zhang Xuan began reciting the things he required for the operation.

Hearing those words, the crowd stared at one another with an awful complexion. The price was indeed a heavy one to pay.

Ordinary herbologist clans would surely be unable to take out all of these things, let alone, use them to save a single plant.

"Alright, I'll prepare them now!" Hearing the items that were required, Garden Owner Xue's eyebrows twitched as well. Even so, it was still within an acceptable range for her.

"Wait a moment..."

Just as she was about to prepare the goods, the young man's voice sounded once more.

"Prepare a Sentiment Drowning Flower as well. It'll be best if it has a maturity of five hundred years and above. Also, bring as many middle-tier spirit stones as you can!"

Chapter 525

Nurturing Soulrouse Grass—Success!

"Sentiment Drowning Flower? Alright!" Garden Owner Xue nodded. But soon, her face reddened in embarrassment as she said, "As for middle-tier spirit stone, I only have one here..."

She had a few Sentiment Drowning Flowers in her herb garden, and the oldest one had already reached a maturity of seven hundred years. However, as for middle-tier spirit stones... even a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert like her only had one in her possession.

Only a Tier 2 Empire like Huanyu Empire had the rights to trade a spirit stone of that tier. The Myriad Kingdom Alliance usually traded using low-tier spirit stones. Even the royal family could only take out a few pieces at once, let alone, her.

"Only one? One is fine as well!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The Sentiment Drowning Flower was for his personal interest, but the middle-tier spirit stone wasn't.

For the spirit of a weak plant to grow swiftly, the pure spiritual energy in a middle-tier spirit stone was a necessity. If he were to only use low-tier spirit stones, the process would take significantly longer.

"I'll go make the preparations now!" Garden Owner Xue hurriedly left.

Soon, she returned.

It would be difficult for others to gather the items that Zhang Xuan had asked for, and it would be impossible to do so without several months of effort. However, as the number one herb garden in Myriad Kingdom City, the herb garden had nearly all of the medicinal herbs that Zhang Xuan needed. As such, it didn't take too long for her to gather it all.

In fact, she even managed to find a bud of the Earth Vein Spirit Vine.

"I require absolute tranquility for my treatment. Garden Owner Xue, I'll have to ask you to invite everyone out of the premises!"

Seeing that everything was prepared, Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

Grafting the spirit of the bud onto the original Earth Vein Spirit Vine would require him to use the ability of a soul oracle. Even though its inheritance had already terminated long ago and very few would be able to recognize it, Zhang Xuan felt that it would be better to be safe than sorry.

"Yes!"

Garden Owner Xue knew that such means tended to be an exclusive secret, and it was normal for one to be unwilling to show it in public. Thus, she nodded her head and led the group out of the herb field.

Only after seeing that everyone had left did Zhang Xuan heave a huge sigh of relief. Looking at the spirit vine bud before him, Zhang Xuan drew out his soul and began the treatment.

...

"Why is Zhang shi not out yet? Do you think that he'll be able to get the Sentiment Drowning Flower?"

In the banquet hall, Zhao Feiwu and Jin Conghai walked about nervously, shooting glances at the herb field from time to time.

Only herbologists and master teachers were allowed to enter the spirit field. As Zhang shi's accompaniment, they weren't permitted entry. As such, they could only wait outside.

Who knew that this wait would take five to six hours. The sky had already set but he hadn't returned yet. This had left them anxious and worried.

Jin Conghai hesitated for a moment before saying, "It should be fine... After all, he's Zhang shi!"

Ever since he'd become acquainted with that young man, no matter what the other party did, he would be able to accomplish it easily. He truly made one suspect whether

there was anything he was incapable of.

"I know Zhang shi's capability but... Garden Owner Xue's eccentric personality is well-known throughout the capital. She doesn't even hesitate to disregard father. Considering that an issue had cropped up with the Earth Vein Spirit Vine, she must be even more anxious now. It probably won't be easy for him to purchase the required medicinal herb from her under such circumstances... I'm afraid that, as soon as Zhang shi speaks, the other party might chase him out straight away!"

Even though Zhao Feiwu admired Zhang shi's capability, she was still worried for the latter.

After all, this Garden Owner Xue was someone who couldn't be forced to do anything. Everything was based on her mood; if she was in good mood, she could sell you anything you wish for as long as you had the money to pay her... But given that her entire herb field was on the verge of dying, her mood must be terrible. It would be highly difficult for Zhang shi to purchase medicinal herbs from her.

Perhaps, Zhang shi might even be chased out before he got a chance to speak.

After all, such things had happened before.

This was exactly what happened with the envoy of the Alliance Head Residence back then.

"That... Now that you speak of it, it does seem possible..."

Worry also flashed across Jin Conghai's eyes.

"Zhang shi seems determined to obtain that Sentiment Drowning Flower. If it comes down to it, I'll plead with my father to help him. With his help, Garden Owner Xue should probably... at least give it some thought..."

A moment later, after seeing that Zhang Xuan wasn't back then, Zhao Feiwu couldn't help but declare.

But even she was unconfident about the matter.

After all, if her father's name was effective, the envoy wouldn't have been chased out back then.

Garden Owner Xue was powerful and didn't give in to threat or persuasion. Even though Zhao Feiwu tended to be witty when dealing such matters, she couldn't find a single solution to this problem.

Before absolute power, all strategy was meaningless.

"We can only hope so... Look, someone is coming!" Jin Conghai nodded. Just as he was about to console Zhao Feiwu, he suddenly caught sight of a figure before him and pointed.

A silhouette was slowly walking toward the banquet hall.

"It's Zhang shi..."

It was the person whom they had been talking about all this while, Zhang Xuan.

"Without a doubt, he must have been chased out..."

Seeing him appear alone, Zhao Feiwu said bitterly before walking up to him with Jin Conghai.

"Zhang shi, you're out. Don't worry about being unable to get the Sentiment Drowning Flower. I'll help you plead with my father to stand up for you..."

Seeing the pale and wearied face of the young man before her, Zhao Feiwu deduced that he must have suffered great humiliation and hurriedly consoled.

"Indeed! Garden Owner Xue is known for being eccentric and difficult so you need not worry too much about it..." Jin Conghai said.

"Ah?"

Before Zhang Xuan could say anything, he ended up being consoled by the duo. He didn't know whether he should cry or laugh at this situation. Just as he was about to explain what truly happened, some hurried footsteps suddenly sounded.

Garden Owner Xue and a few other people rushed into the banquet hall.

"What do you all intend to do?" Seeing the anxious look on their faces, Jin Conghai hurried stepped forward to shield Zhang Xuan and the princess.

"Zhang shi, here is a hundred medicinal herbs with a maturity of five hundred years. It's a token of my appreciation so do accept it. Furthermore, from today onward, you shall be an eternal friend of my Western Herb Garden. If you have anything you need, feel free to speak. I'll supply you everything within my means for free!"

Disregarding the anxious Jin Conghai, Garden Owner Xue walked up to Zhang Xuan, bowed deeply, and passed a storage ring over.

"Eternal friend?"

"Free?"

Seeing the eccentric Garden Owner Xue who dared to even snub the Alliance Head Residence bowing to Zhang Xuan and even gifting him with medicinal herbs, Zhao Feiwu and Jin Conghai's eyes widened in shock.

What in the world happened...

Wasn't this fellow supposed to be an incredibly obstinate person? Why did she suddenly... bow as though a humble student, even going to the extent of gifting so many precious herbs?

"Compared to Zhang shi, our proficiency as herbologists is indeed lacking!"

"It's all thanks to Zhang shi's credit that the Earth Vein Spirit Vine was revived!"

Just as they were perplexed over what was going on, they suddenly heard the discussion of the returning crowd.

"Zhang shi... has cured the Earth Vein Spirit Vine?"

Coming to a realization, the duo stared at one another frenziedly.

They had heard Zhang shi's discussion with Lu Zhan previously. For a fellow who didn't even know what a herbologist was to fix the Earth Vein Spirit Vine which stumped even the master herbologists...

Why did it sound like something that came out from a novel?

...

"Not only did Zhang shi manage to buy the Sentiment Drowning Flower, he was even escorted out of the herb garden by Garden Owner Xue, and the latter promised to supply him with whatever medicinal herbs he needed in the future... On top of that, you said that he treated the Earth Vein Spirit Vine?"

In the Alliance Head Residence, Alliance Head Zhao widened his eyes in shock as he heard the report from his daughter and Jin Conghai.

For a very long time, he was unable to recover from his shock...

...

Seated cross-legged within a room, Zhang Xuan stared at the crimson flower before him.

A fresh Sentiment Drowning Flower with a maturity of seven hundred years!

With sufficient medicinal herbs and the means of a soul oracle, it wasn't too difficult to graft the spirit vine bud onto the original Earth Vein Spirit Vine. Naturally, after he succeeded, Garden Owner Xue immediately thanked him profusely.

His motive at the herb garden this time around was the Sentiment Drowning Grass. After obtaining what he needed, he immediately returned back to the Alliance Head Residence with Zhao Feiwu and Jin Conghai and shut himself within a room in the lodgings that Zhao Feiwu prepared for him.

It was an average-sized residence, but it was very close to the Alliance Head Residence. There were guards, servants, and maids residing in the residence so Sun Qiang was spared the additional effort of hiring them.

After arranging a resting spot for the Demon Cinque Beast, Zhang Xuan returned back to his room and took out the Sentiment Drowning Flower.

"I have to draw my soul out first!"

A soul slowly gushed out from his acupoint. Raising his hand, the flower before his physical body flew to him.

"To nurture a Soulrouse Grass, one has to inscribe a formation to gather soul energy on a plant capable of harnessing soul energy... After which, one has to supply soul

energy to the plant so hasten its growth..."

Recalling the cultivation method of a Soulrouse Grass, Zhang Xuan's sight fell on the flower before him.

Even though the Sentiment Drowning Flower was a spirit herb, it didn't possess sentience. As such, it was easier for it to house the soul energy of a soul oracle.

If it was any other sentient medicinal herb, the herb might be destroyed as soon as he tried to infuse his soul energy into it. Naturally, he would be unable to successfully nurture a Soulrouse Grass like that.

Hu!

Driving his soul energy, a powerful energy enveloped the flower, slowly morphing the appearance and shape of the flower.

After cultivating the Heaven's Path Soul Art, Zhang Xuan's soul energy in itself had already reached the level equivalent to the strength of a Transcendent Mortal 2-dan cultivator, and that was even above that of his zhenqi cultivation. The cultivation of Soulrouse Grass wasn't easy, but given his current level of soul energy, it wasn't an issue.

Thus, he spent three days holed up in his room.

Finally, on the fourth day, 'weng!', the crimson flower before him shook and turned into a white seedling.

The nurturing of the Soulrouse Grass was a success!

"Now, I only have to nourish it with my soul energy every day. It should mature within two months!"

Zhang Xuan nodded his head in satisfaction.

The Sentiment Drowning Grass had been successfully cultivated into a Soulrouse Grass, but as it was still a seedling, it couldn't be used yet. However, Zhang Xuan was in no hurry either. In just one or two months' time, it should mature fully.

Once he crafts the Soulrouse Incense with it, he would be able to save Lu Chong.

The past three days of exerting his soul energy in his room had left him slightly wearied.

Returning his soul back to his body, he took out the middle-tier spirit stone he obtained from Song Chao and absorbed it. After he had recovered from his fatigue, he walked out of the room.

The sun hung high in the sky, and even before walking into the main hall, Zhang Xuan saw Sun Qiang walking over.

"Young master, Su shi and Ling shi are here to meet you."

Su shi, Su Fan, and Ling shi, Ling Yuheng, were the two 4-star master teachers who'd invited him to participate in the Master Teacher Pavilion back when he was still in Tianwu Kingdom.

"How did they know that I was here?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback for a moment before shaking his head upon coming to a realization.

Zhang Xuan hadn't concealed his trail ever since arriving at the Myriad Kingdom City. He even went to the Western Herb Garden to solve the issue surrounding the Earth Vein Spirit Vine. As one of the most powerful organizations in the region, it wasn't difficult for the Master Teacher Pavilion to uncover his location.

Zhang Xuan had previously said that he would look for them as soon as he arrived at Myriad Kingdom City. However, it had been a few days since his arrival and yet he hadn't gone to the Master Teacher Pavilion yet. Most probably, they were getting impatient and thus they came here looking for him.

"Let's go and take a look!"

Understanding the situation, Zhang Xuan strode off, heading to the main hall.

Chapter 526

Selection Round

Stepping into the lounge, Zhang Xuan saw Su shi and Ling shi seated on the chairs by the side. Upon seeing him, the duo seemed visibly relieved.

If not for the ruckus he had caused at the herb garden a while ago, they wouldn't have known that Zhang shi was already in the city.

As soon as Zhang Xuan entered, Su shi immediately stared at him expectantly and asked, "May I know if... Yang shi is in Myriad Kingdom City as well?"

Back in Tianwu Kingdom, Yang shi had helped him reach the seventh circulation of the Miniature Solar Art, thus inducing a huge leap in his cultivation. Even until now, he was still grateful to the other party for his help.

Inviting Zhang Xuan over to the Master Teacher Pavilion was only one of the reasons behind his visit. The other one was to meet his benefactor.

After all, the other party was a master teacher who was likely to exceed 6-star!

Otherwise, there was no need for the two of them to come personally just to meet a 2-star master teacher.

"My teacher... is currently wandering around the lands. I have no idea where he is either!" Zhang Xuan replied.

The 'teacher' Zhang Xuan spoke of was actually referring to Zhang Xuan himself. It was already so difficult for him to fool this duo; given that there were so many experts here, if he were to get caught playing off as Yang shi here, he would surely be a goner.

In any case, just the existence of Yang shi itself was sufficient to induce fear in others, there was no need for him to take such a risk. If people were to realize that Yang shi was actually a fake, the entire situation could backlash on him.

Upon hearing that Yang shi wasn't around, Su shi and Ling shi shook their heads in

disappointment. However, they soon recovered and said, "In truth, Ling shi and I are here because we have something we require your help on!"

"Su shi, please speak!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"It's like that. We have invited you to participate in the Master Teacher Tournament before... May I know if Yang shi has talked to you about the matter yet?" Su shi asked.

Back then, in Tianwu Kingdom, they had once brought up the matter with Zhang Xuan, but Zhang Xuan seemed to be slightly hesitant about agreeing. In the end, it was Yang shi who accepted it in his stead.

Even though Yang shi said he would persuade Zhang shi on their behalf, it was best to double confirm the matter before jumping into any conclusion.

"My teacher has told me about it! As long as I become the champion, I'll be rewarded with middle-tier spirit stones. Don't worry, I've agreed to it already!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

"Cough cough..."

Choking on their saliva, Su shi and Ling shi fell speechless.

Champion?

You sure know how to dream!

Twenty-eight powers consisting of innumerable experts. Your talent might be formidable, but they are also geniuses, and not to mention, they have cultivated longer than you.

Our motive in looking for you is just in hopes that you could win us a better placing. Even top ten seems out of reach, champion...

They would only dare to say such words in their dreams.

"It's like that. The Master Teacher Tournament is a battle among the geniuses of the twenty-eight powers, and our Myriad Kingdom Alliance is given the privilege of playing host this year. Pavilion Master Kang hopes for us to get a better ranking this year. Thus... we gathered the top-notch geniuses from throughout the lands for them

to pit it out in advance and narrow the group down to just two to participate in the tournament..."

After hesitating for a moment, Su Fan spoke his motive.

"Pit it out in advance?"

"Yes. A total of six candidates have been nominated by the elders..." Su shi said.

As the Myriad Kingdom Alliance was hosting the Master Teacher Tournament this time around, Pavilion Master Kang regarded this event very highly and he hoped that they could win a much better placing from before. As such, he passed down an order for the elders to nominate the most talented genius they could find, and it was for this purpose that Su shi and Ling shi visited Tianwu Kingdom.

However, they weren't the only elders in the Master Teacher Pavilion. The others also made their nominations too, and a total of six candidates were chosen. The duo had to spend a lot of effort to confirm Zhang Xuan's placing as a candidate as well.

Otherwise, given Zhang Xuan's identity as a 2-star master teacher, how could he possibly be qualified to compete with all the other geniuses?

"What you mean is that... you wish for me to participate in an internal selection round conducted by the alliance's Master Teacher Pavilion?" Zhang Xuan quickly understood what the other party was driving at.

"That's right. Only two participants from each power are allowed for the Master Teacher Pavilion. Thus, there's a need for us to conduct a selection round among the six candidates. The two finalized candidates will become a target of grooming for the Master Teacher Pavilion for the next two months so as to prepare them for the Master Teacher Tournament!" Su shi said.

The most practical way of getting a good placing was to train harder. Even if it was a last-minute effort, two months should be sufficient to achieve significant results.

After hearing the explanation, Zhang Xuan came to a realization.

The Master Teacher Tournament was a huge event which the Myriad Kingdom Alliance and twenty-seven other powers were involved with. Even with Su shi and Ling shi's recommendations, the alliance couldn't give the slot so easily to him.

After all, he came from a humble kingdom. It had only been three months since his rise, and it was extremely normal for him to be doubted by others.

Zhang Xuan didn't think much of the situation. In any case, he was also curious to see where he ranked among the geniuses of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance.

After settling Lu Chong's matter, he would concentrate his effort on cultivating so as to reach 9-star master teacher before thirty. Otherwise, once the Innate Fetal Poison made its move, everything would be for naught.

Having read through innumerable books, Zhang Xuan learned that master teachers weren't just about strength and capability. Reputation was also of essence. Reputation was credibility, and without a good reputation, how could a master teacher win the trust of others? As such, this was one of the less tangible criteria taken into account when one was applying for a promotion.

And the easiest way to accrue reputation was to join the Master Teacher Tournament.

Besides, to raise his cultivation, Zhang Xuan needed innumerable cultivation techniques to form the Heaven's Path Divine Art and sufficient middle-tier spirit stones.

Even though Zhang Xuan was skilled in the art of beguiling, there was a limit to what he could gather through such. If he could achieve incredible results during the Master Teacher Tournament, it should become much easier for him to gather spirit stones.

After thinking all of these through, Zhang Xuan had nothing to hesitate about anymore. Thus, he asked, "When does the selection round begin?"

"According to Pavilion Master Kang's intentions, it's supposed to be conducted a few days ago. However, you had yet to appear and so, the both of us tried all ways to postpone the selection round. Now that you're here, we can finally begin!"

Seeing that the young man before them didn't reject the matter, Su shi and Ling shi heaved a sigh of relief.

After all, they had to fight very hard to delay the selection round by several days, and there were many who were displeased by their action. If Zhang Xuan were to really refuse to join the selection round, they would be in trouble.

"Is it conducted in the Master Teacher Pavilion?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"That's right!" The duo nodded their heads.

"Then let's go over then!" Zhang Xuan stood up.

Since he had decided on the matter, there was nothing for him to hesitate about.

"Ah..."

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was in a rush to head over, the duo smiled bitterly, "Zhang shi, hold on for a moment. Allow me to introduce to you the other candidates first. This way, you will be prepared when you meet them!

"Of the five candidates, three are from the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion. The most famous among them is Ruohuan gongzi, Jun Ruohuan. He's the head of the Four Gentlemen in Myriad Kingdom City, the direct disciple of Pavilion Master Kang. He's twenty-nine this year, and he passed his 4-star examination at the start of the year, thus making him a full-fledged 4-star primary master teacher!"

Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

He had seen a 4-star primary master teacher genius before as well-Song Chao.

Even though that fellow seemed a little slow-witted before him, as a 4-star master teacher, he surely possessed an astonishing eye of discernment and unbelievable talent.

Jun Ruohuan should be the same as well.

"After him is the direct disciple of the Master Teacher Pavilion's Elder Hai, Fu Xiaochen, Fu shi. He was evaluated as a 3-star pinnacle master teacher two years ago, and since then, he hasn't taken any examinations at all. Thus, no one knows the current extent of his ability. Even so, based on my estimates, he should be on par with Ruohuan gongzi!

"These two are the most popular candidates this time around, and thus, they will be your greatest competitors as well. As for the remaining three, one of them is Elder Feng's disciple while the other two are picked out from the vassal kingdoms under the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. They are all 3-star pinnacle master teachers under thirty as

well!"

Su shi quickly briefed Zhang Xuan on the background of the other five candidates.

"Even the weakest of them is a 3-star pinnacle master teacher?"

Zhang Xuan was astonished.

One would already be considered as an incredible talent for reaching 2-star beneath thirty in Xuanyuan Kingdom, and yet here, there were five who far exceeded that level, and one of them had even reached 4-star. As expected of the alliance, the center of power and affluence of the innumerable kingdoms.

Thinking that Zhang Xuan might have lost his confidence, Su shi consoled, "Indeed, but you need not worry about that. Your master teacher rank might be beneath them, but your eye of discernment and knowledge are in no way inferior to them... I think that you still stand a good chance!"

If not for the latter's outstanding performance in Tianwu Kingdom previously, the duo wouldn't have gone to such extents of recommending him.

After all, an ordinary 2-star master teacher wouldn't stand a chance against that lineup at all.

"What will be tested in the Master Teacher Tournament?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

He had only heard briefly about the Master Teacher Tournament from the duo and as such, he didn't know much detail about it.

The books he had read also had a limited description on the matter.

"You don't know?" The duo was taken aback for a moment before they flew into a frenzy. "Yang shi didn't explain the matter to you?"

They had told Yang shi about Zhang shi's participation in the Master Teacher Tournament back in Tianwu Kingdom, and so, they thought that Yang shi would at least offer some guidance or advice to Zhang shi beforehand... If that was the case, with the guidance from a 6-star or above master teacher, they would stand a much better chance.

But who knew that... After so long, Zhang shi actually knew nothing at all?

Are you mistaken?

Half of the reason why the duo insisted on having Zhang shi participate in the competition was because of his outstanding performance, and the other half was due to their trust in Yang shi's teaching capability.

Since Yang shi had agreed on the matter, surely he wouldn't make his student embarrass himself... But why in the world did Zhang shi not know anything at all?

"My teacher hasn't told me anything about it!" Zhang Xuan replied.

Hearing the other party's reply, the duo rolled their eyes.

Was Yang shi simply that courageous or did he possess absolute trust in his student?

Shaking his head, Su shi could only start explaining the matter helplessly. "The Master Teacher Tournament assesses a master teacher on his overall capability. The test varies every year but... they are centered around the fundamentals of master teachers, such as Soul Depth, cultivation realm, teaching capability, understanding of cultivation, offering pointers, discerning flaws...

"In truth, it is similar to a master teacher examination, just that it will be slightly stricter. For example, in a normal master teacher examination, one is considered to have pass the examination just by meeting the passing requirement within a given period of time. On the other hand, the Master Teacher Tournament will gauge one by the duration one takes to accomplish a task, and the one who takes the shortest time will be victorious."

Zhang Xuan came to a realization.

This was extremely similar to the competitions in his previous life.

Take a normal hundred-meter race for example, if A took ten seconds whereas B took three days, naturally, A would be the winner.

Under the pressure of time, one's mental fortitude would be put to the test. Often, there were capable master teachers who found themselves unable to perform under such stress.

After explaining the matter a little longer, Zhang Xuan's understanding of the Master Teacher Tournament deepened.

In truth, the Master Teacher Tournament was a battlefield where different master teachers pitted their capability against one another, and the strongest one would emerge victorious.

As long as one's foundation was strong, one need not fear anything in the tournament.

This was the reason why Su shi and Ling shi went through so much trouble to go to Tianwu Kingdom just to recruit Zhang Xuan into their team.

After introducing the tournament, Su shi said, "Alright, let's go to the Master Teacher Pavilion. Even though the tests in the selection round are likely to be different from the real tournament itself, the main idea is still there. This time, Pavilion Master Kang has come up with the tests personally. I think this will be a good experience for you to prepare for the real tournament!"

"Un!" Nodding his head, Zhang Xuan instructed Sun Qiang on several matters before leaving to the Master Teacher Pavilion with the duo.

Chapter 527

Pavilion Master Kang

The Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion is the headquarter of the Master Teacher Pavilions of the vassal kingdoms under the alliance.

It was located at a distance not too far from the Alliance Head Residence, and the group didn't take long to reach their destination.

It was a grand building with a majestic hall. As soon as they stepped into the lounge, they immediately saw a massive statue of a person holding onto a scroll and looking into the distance. In his eyes was compassion for all living beings in the world.

The sight of the statue removed all negative emotions from one, putting one into a state of calmness.

Empyrean Kong shi!

Taking a brief scan of the hall, there were at least a hundred people dressed in long robe here.

"So many master teachers..." Zhang Xuan was shocked.

Those who were qualified to wear the long robe were master teachers who had obtained their emblems. Putting aside the ranks of the master teachers here, just the number of them was already astonishing in itself.

One must know that Tianxuan Kingdom didn't even have a single master teacher. And yet, there were over a hundred of them here, and many of them were 2-star as well.

As expected of the center of the alliance, the cultural hub for the kingdoms... Fearsome!

"Actually, most of those master teachers aren't from Myriad Kingdom City. Every month, a 4-star master teacher conducts a lecture at the square outside the Master Teacher Pavilion, and many master teachers visit the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master

Teacher Pavilion just for this event," Su shi explained.

While the huge amount of resources flowing through Myriad Kingdom City was a reason why the cultivators here were strong, what that played a larger part to that was the presence of high ranked master teachers.

The lessons of such master teachers tended to be more insightful, and if one managed to obtain one of their Tutelage Jade Token, one's could receive tailored guidance on their cultivation, thus inducing swift improvements.

In fact, it could be said that if Myriad Kingdom City didn't have this Master Teacher Pavilion, it would be impossible for so many Transcendent Mortal experts to appear here.

Zhang Xuan nodded his head in agreement as he scanned the surroundings.

Not only were there many master teachers here, there were also some who came here to study. There were many chambers in the surroundings of the hall, and as long as one was willing to pay a suitable price, one could be given a one-to-one guidance session any time they wished.

But of course, the higher ranked a master teacher was, the more expensive the payment would be and the more difficult it would be to make an appointment with them.

After all, there were a limited number of 4-star master teachers here, and they couldn't possibly be spending all of their time on teaching others.

On top of the chambers, there were also some huge auditoriums within the compound. The poorer cultivators would often attend lectures conducted in the auditoriums instead. Even though the results would be far poorer than a one-to-one guidance session, one could save quite a bit of money through opting for this instead. Thus, it is quite a popular alternative.

"2-star Master Teacher Huang Chen's 'Zongshi Realm Introduction Lecture' still has two slots. Is there anyone interested in signing up?"

"3-star Master Teacher Bai Mu's 'How a Zhizun Advanced Realm Should Battle' still has three slots! It's a small classroom of just ten people, and it'll only cost 5 low-tier spirit stones..."

Walking through the hall, Zhang Xuan could see quite a lot of people raising a board as they rallied for participants. Written on the board was the name of the master teacher, their master teacher rank, the content, and the timing of their lecture.

There were many common problems that cultivators would meet with in their cultivation, and based on their needs, they would sign up for the lesson they deemed most appropriate for their condition.

While those who attended the lesson could copy down and repeat the content of the lecture to another, without the Impartation of Heaven's Will, a skill exclusive to only master teachers, the same words would result in very different effects.

Otherwise, if one could play the role of a master teacher just by repeating the content of a lecture, master teachers wouldn't be such a prestigious and irreplaceable occupation.

"The higher the tier of a kingdom, the greater the standing of a master teacher. In Myriad Kingdom City, even the alliance head would have to treat a 4-star master teacher with utmost respect!" Su shi said as he stroked his beard, his tone carrying a tinge of pride.

Being a master teacher was known as the number one occupation in the world, and at 4-star, one was already an existence that countless people could only look up to throughout their life.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

He knew about the prestigious standing of master teachers as well. If not for the immense standing of this occupation shielding him, his astonishing accomplishments would surely have caused him to be kidnapped, dissected, and experimented on for research.

It was precisely because everyone knew that he was a master teacher and that he had a powerful teacher backing him that they thought it was natural for him to achieve such results.

After all, a 6-star master teacher was an existence unimaginable to them. It wouldn't be surprising if a 6-star master teacher was involved in they deemed impossible.

"While master teachers enjoy tremendous prestige, they carry a burden equaling it as

well. Back then, Kong shi ruled that master teachers have to be a role model to the world and bring enlightenment to everyone, regardless of their background... Over the years, the Master Teacher Pavilion has expanded into all kingdoms, and the strength of the human race has indeed been brought to new heights as well!" Su shi said.

While he felt proud, he knew that this was nothing for him to brag about. Rather, tied along together with it was a heavy responsibility to shoulder.

What a master teacher seeks to achieve is not personal glory, but the greatness of the entire human race.

The greatest honor that a master teacher could receive was to have his own students surpass him.

"Indeed!" Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

The more he came to know about the responsibilities of a master teacher, the more he shared some thoughts.

When he saw the rapid growth of his student, what he felt was no longer envy but delight.

This was the essence of a 'teacher'!

There was no other occupation that was the same as this!

"Alright, let's not talk about this anymore. I'll take you to meet Pavilion Master Kang first before we continue on with the selection round!"

Shaking his head, Su shi accounted grimly, "Pavilion Master Kang is the most talented genius of our Master Teacher Pavilion for the past hundred years. He's a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, and he has a straightforward and earnest personality! He values humility and so, when you meet him later, make sure to listen to his teachings earnestly. If you were to anger him, you might be stripped of your candidacy so take note of what you say!"

Pavilion Master Kang was younger than Su shi and Ling shi, and he was the direct disciple of the previous pavilion master. Even so, he was the one who had the final say regarding the candidacy for the Master Teacher Tournament. The two of them had paid a heavy price for Zhang Xuan's slot, so they couldn't allow anything to go wrong

now.

"Don't worry! I've always been a humble person!" Zhang Xuan nodded earnestly.

"You? Humble?"

Su shi and Ling shi fell speechless.

Do you think that the Master Teacher Pavilion is incapable of digging all that you've done... Destroying the Master Teacher Pavilion when taking the master teacher examination; barging into the Wall of Dilemma in the Physician Guild, forcing the previous guild leader to step down...

And not too long ago, you challenged the Harmonious Stream of Flowing Goblets in Honghai City and nearly caused the Appraiser Hall to close down; at the Formation Master Guild, you tore down the other party's wall...

Look at your own records... Which part of it doesn't show that you're a troublemaker?

And you still dare to tell us that you're... humble?

If you are humble, there would be no arrogant people in the world anymore!

"Cough cough! Try to cut down on your words when you meet Pavilion Master Kang, we'll speak for you instead. What you should focus on now is to condition yourself and prepare for the selection round later on," Ling shi instructed.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

He was delighted to be spared the hassle of talking as well.

Amidst the conversation of the trio, they soon arrived outside a room.

"Elder Su, Elder Ling!" The young man guarding outside the room clasped his fist and bowed.

"Is Pavilion Master Kang in?" Su shi asked.

"The pavilion master is inside, this way please!"

Given the other party's standing as an elder and a 4-star master teacher, the young man immediately led them in without any hesitation.

Unlike the rooms allocated to the other master teacher, this one was much more spacious. Many bookshelves filled with all kinds of books were placed against the wall. A stern-looking middle-aged man was currently standing by the side of the bookshelf, browsing through a book in his hand.

The young man stepped forward and bowed.

"Pavilion master, Elder Su and Elder Ling are here!"

"Un! You're here, take a seat wherever you want!" Lifting his gaze, the middle-aged man smiled.

Zhang Xuan turned to look at the middle-aged man.

Even though the middle-aged man wasn't as advanced in age as Su shi and Ling shi, he exuded an incredible aura of authority. It was similar to the sensation he felt when facing Alliance Head Zhao, just that it was even more intense.

This was especially so for his eyes. His dark irises were deep, and they gleamed with wisdom, seemingly capable of seeing through all facade.

'His Soul Depth is probably no lower than 14.0,' Zhang Xuan thought.

Every 3.0 Soul Depth was a demarcation point. A 4-star master teacher would possess a Soul Depth of at least 12.0 whereas a 5-star master teacher would possess a Soul Depth of at least 15.0.

A normal 4-star master teacher's Soul Depth would vary between 12.0 to 15.0, but due to the difficulty in raising one's Soul Depth, most 4-star master teachers only had a Soul Depth of around 12.0.

Taking Song Chao for example, his Soul Depth was only 12.0. This was also why he was completely helpless against Zhang Xuan's Impartation of Heaven's Will.

Even well-established 4-star master teachers like Su shi and Ling shi only had a Soul Depth of 13.0.

Yet, Pavilion Master Kang's Soul Depth was actually above 14.0. Considering his current age, as long as he didn't fall, it was just a matter of time before he becomes a 5-star master teacher.

'It seems like his Soul Depth is slightly higher than mine... '

After the consumption of two golden pages, two acknowledgements as a Celestial Master Teacher, and a Soul Tempering of Mentor's Calligraphy, Zhang Xuan's current Soul Depth had reached 14.1. However, based on his estimation, the other party's Soul Depth seemed to be slightly higher than his.

Suddenly, a thought appeared in Zhang Xuan's mind.

'I wonder if my Impartation of Heaven's Will will work on him... '

Before heading to the soul oracle tomb, Zhang Xuan's Soul Depth was only 12.1, 0.1 higher than Song Chao's. Even so, he still managed to beguile the other party.

In other words... as a Celestial Master Teacher, it was easier for him to convince others through his Impartation of Heaven's Will.

Having gone through two acknowledgements, even though his Soul Depth was lower than the other party's, could his Impartation of Heaven's Will possibly work on the other party?

'However, one of the requirements of using the Impartation of Heaven's Will is to be on the side of reason. Only when one's logic is impeccable will it work. If I can't find any flaws on him, it'll be difficult for me to beguile him!'

Zhang Xuan didn't think that he could succeed easily even though he had thought of giving it a try.

The Impartation of Heaven's Will was centered around trust and credibility... Without knowing the other party's flaws to exploit to win trust and credibility, it would be difficult for Zhang Xuan to succeed.

His Eye of Insight was ineffective given the other party's cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle. Under the condition that the other party didn't execute a battle technique, it was impossible for him to uncover the flaws of the other party.

These thoughts floated in Zhang Xuan's mind for a moment before disappearing. Following which, Su shi stepped forward and introduced, "Pavilion master, this is Zhang shi whom we told you about previously!"

"He's the 2-star master teacher who broke the records of the Tianwu Kingdom master teacher examination, and you staked your all on recommending?"

Placing the book back onto the table, Pavilion Master Kang walked over and sat on the main seat before raising his head to assess Zhang Xuan.

"Yes!" Su shi and Ling shi nodded their heads.

"Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle and a lack of discipline in his movements. With a look, it's clear that he has never practiced any battle techniques... This is the genius you two spoke of?"

Looking at Zhang Xuan, Pavilion Master Kang frowned.

Chapter 528

Three Questions

In order to avoid casting doubt on the peculiarity of his Heaven's Path zhenqi, Zhang Xuan didn't hide his cultivation. Thus, it was easy for any cultivator to see that his current strength was only at Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle.

As a 4-star pinnacle master teacher possessing a Soul Depth of 14.0, it was no problem for him to see through this much.

On top of that, experts who had trained hard in battle techniques tended to show some traces of it in their hands, feet, and habits. Yet, the young man before him showed no traces of these traits at all. It was clear he had never practiced any battle techniques before...

How could such a person be a genius?

The reason why master teachers were invincible in the same class wasn't just due to their ability to seeing through the flaws of their opponents. More importantly, their grasp over their own manipulation of zhenqi and battle techniques had also reached an astounding level.

How could a fellow who had never practiced a battle technique before be called a genius? It was making too light of the Master Teacher Tournament to have such a person represent the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion in it!

Hearing the doubtful tone of the pavilion master, Su shi hurriedly explained, "Zhang shi's cultivation might be low but his comprehension in the way of master teachers has reached an astounding level..."

"Comprehension?" Pavilion Master Kang's complexion darkened. "Elder Su, what we are choosing are talents to participate in the Master Teacher Tournament. As an elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion, you should know what kind of opponents we are facing!"

It was no wonder why Pavilion Master Kang was so angry. Su shi and Ling shi had

staked their all to vie for this slot so the latter thought that Zhang Xuan would surely be a formidable genius. Yet, the other party turned out to be only a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle cultivator. Furthermore, he didn't seem to have practiced any battle technique before... With this level of strength, how could he emerge victorious amidst many other 4-star master teachers?

Even though strength wasn't all that was tested in the Master Teacher Tournament, it played quite a significant role. If one's cultivation realm wasn't even on par with the other party, how could one possibly offer the other party guidance?

Even if one was able to do so, it would just be completely theoretical. Any pointer that wasn't proven in practice was worthless.

"I know, but..." Su shi panicked.

"No buts, take him away!" Pavilion Master Kang shook his hands impatiently.

"Pavilion master, don't be in such a rush to make a decision..."

Ling shi stepped forward and said, "Zhang shi's current cultivation might only be at Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle now... but do you know what was his cultivation realm when we last saw him?"

"When you last saw him... around twenty days ago?" Pavilion Master Jiang raised his eyebrows.

It was around a month ago that these two elders went to Tianwu Kingdom. Gauging by the time, considering that the trip took around ten days, they should have met with this young man around twenty days ago.

"Un!" Ling shi nodded.

"What was his cultivation realm then?" Pavilion Master Kang raised his teacup and sipped on it.

So what if he was able to cultivate swiftly and raised his strength from Transcendent Mortal 1-dan intermediate stage to Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle?

There were only two months left until the Master Teacher Tournament. No matter how talented he was, he would only be able to reach Transcendent Mortal 2-dan during

this period of time. With such cultivation, he would still be unable to match up to the other competitors!

"Zongshi realm! Twenty days ago, when we first met Zhang shi... he was only at Zongshi realm!" Ling shi said grimly.

Pu! A mouthful of tea came spurting out of Pavilion Master Kang's mouth and nose. Widening his eyes, he uttered in disbelief, "Fighter 8-dan... Zongshi realm?"

You must be joking with me!

To raise one's cultivation from Zongshi realm to Zhizun realm, then on to Half-Transcension and finally Transcendent Mortal 1-dan in twenty days... Not to mention, Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle...

That was a total of three realms...

Even if one were to ride on a rocket, it would be impossible to do it so quickly!

In truth, he wasn't the only one in disbelief. When Ling shi and Su shi first noticed Zhang Xuan's cultivation realm, even though they didn't say anything, they also felt their hearts crumbling within.

However, knowing that the other party's teacher was likely to be a master teacher ranked 6-star and above, the shock they felt alleviated by a little.

Given that a high-ranked master teacher like Yang shi had traveled to a backward location like Tianxuan Kingdom without informing the Master Teacher Pavilion, he was clearly trying to conceal his identity.

As a junior of the other party, without the latter's explicit permission, they didn't dare to inform others about him.

Thus, even while frenziedly promoting Zhang Xuan, they had never divulged Yang shi's existence. As such, Pavilion Master Kang was unaware of the matter as well. That was why upon hearing that Zhang Xuan had grown from Zongshi realm to Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle in less than a month... he felt as though the world had gone insane.

This was no longer cultivation but... infusion of cultivation!

In fact, even infusion of cultivation wouldn't be so exaggerated!

"I can vow the authenticity of this matter!" Su shi added.

"To reach Transcendent Mortal 1-dan from Zongshi realm in twenty or so days... As long as he cultivates diligently in the next two months, reaching Transcendent Mortal 2-dan pinnacle or even Transcendent Mortal 3-dan primary stage shouldn't be an issue... He would still be able to stand against those geniuses..."

Knowing that these two elders wouldn't lie, Pavilion Master Kang fell into contemplation.

Most of the geniuses who traveled to the Myriad Kingdom City to participate in the Master Teacher Tournament were 4-star master teachers.

A 1-star master teacher had to possess a cultivation of at least Tongxuan realm, a 2-star master teacher a cultivation of at least Zongshi realm, and a 3-star master teacher a cultivation of at least Zhizun realm.

On the other hand, the prerequisite to becoming a 4-star master teacher was Transcendent Mortal 2-dan. As long as one reached Origin Energy realm primary stage, one would have met the cultivation criterion to becoming a 4-star master teacher.

As such, most geniuses in the tournament possessed a cultivation realm between 2-dan Origin Energy realm and 4-dan Clarifying Turbidity realm.

Given how quickly Zhang shi cultivated, it was possible that he could bring up cultivation realm up to Transcendent Mortal 3-dan primary stage within the next two months. With such cultivation, he would at least rank in the middle among the participants, and perhaps, he might really be able to get a good ranking down for the Myriad Kingdom Alliance.

"Since that's the case, I'll give him a chance then. I'll raise three questions, and as long as he can answer them accurately, I'll allow him to participate in the selection round. As for whether he can take one of the two slots in the selection round, that'll depend on his performance then!"

After a moment of contemplation, Pavilion Master Kang raised his head and said.

"Alright!" Hearing that Zhang Xuan would at least be given a chance, Su shi and Ling shi heaved a sigh of relief and hurriedly turned to look at Zhang Xuan.

With this look, they staggered and nearly fainted on the spot.

It turned out that Zhang shi wasn't even listening to their conversation. Instead, he was standing in front of the bookshelves by the wall and his finger was brushing across the books, as though he was looking for a specific book.

They were so nervous over the slots that their hearts were about to beat out of their chests, and yet, this fellow didn't seem to care at all...

Wasn't he way too daring?

To allow you to participate in the tournament, the two of us even put our names on the line. Yet, you don't seem care at all...

Just the thought of it left them dizzy-headed.

"Zhang shi..." Unable to stand it any longer, Su shi stepped forward to stop Zhang Xuan. "The pavilion master has decided to give you a chance. He'll ask you three questions, and as long as you can answer them correctly, you'll be allowed to join the selection round!"

"Alright!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head and walked over.

Uninvolved in the conversation, Zhang Xuan began looking around the room while the others were discussing the matter. It was then that he noticed that there were quite a few Transcendent Mortal 2-dan books on the bookshelves by the wall. Thus, he walked over and collected them in the Library of Heaven's Path.

He had collected five hundred Origin Energy realm cultivation technique manuals back in Honghai City, and adding the additional hundreds of books on the bookshelves here, he could already form a perfect Heaven's Path Divine Art.

As for their conversation, he wasn't really paying attention to it. He didn't even have sufficient time to look at the books, how could he possibly have the energy to listen to the boring discussion of another?

"My questions will be about cultivation and guidance. As long as you can answer them

correctly, I'll give you a chance to participate in the selection round!"

Pavilion Master Kang turned around and casually picked up the book which he was reading just before. "This is a case that I have faced previously!

"A Half-Transcension cultivator was once impaled in the left lung, and as a result, the zhenqi in the left meridian was unable to flow smoothly. Under such circumstances, what kind of pointer should one offer so that the cultivator can successfully reach Transcendent Mortal realm?"

This was a case which he had dealt with personally before. It was an extremely difficult problem, and he'd had to look through innumerable books before he could find a solution for it.

However, the Master Teacher Tournament would be a lot more difficult than this. If the other party couldn't even solve this problem, it would be futile even if the other party participated in the tournament. If that was the case, he would rather terminate the other party's candidacy right now.

Since the question was concerning a Half-Transcension, it was within the other party's scope.

"Transcendent Mortal realm requires one's cultivation to form a complete and whole system before one can harmonize and manipulate the environment! Given that the cultivator's left lung is pierced through and the zhenqi in his left meridian is blocked... that is equivalent to a deformity appearing on a perfect circle. It will be nigh impossible for the other party to achieve a breakthrough!"

Upon hearing the question, Su shi frowned. "This is truly difficult!"

"Indeed. Even for me, I'd require at least eight steps to solve this problem!" Ling shi nodded in agreement.

As 4-star master teachers, their depth and scope of knowledge were not to be underestimated. Even though this question was difficult, it was still within their capability. Just that, it would require significant effort on their part.

After a moment of contemplation, Su shi replied, "I would require seven steps!"

"Your Miniature Solar Art has reached the seventh circulation, so it is normal for you

to require less steps than me. However, based on what I know, when the pavilion master solved the question back then, he was only a 3-star master teacher and... he only used five steps," Ling shi said.

"Five steps?"

Su shi narrowed his eyes.

The less steps required to solve a problem, the more efficient it was. As such, the probability of success tended to be higher.

Similarly, the effectiveness would also be greater.

Even given their current capability, solving the problem perfectly would require a minimum of seven steps on their part. Yet, back when the pavilion master was only a 3-star master teacher, he only needed five steps... That was truly an astounding feat.

"I wonder how many steps Zhang shi would require to solve this question!"

After a moment of shock, Su shi turned to look at the young man before them.

"How many steps? I'm worried that he might be unable to even find a solution to it!" Ling shi shook his head.

Even though they were confident in Zhang shi's capability, the pavilion master's question was indeed extremely difficult. Even they would require a long duration of research to solve the problem properly. It was extremely doubtful that the young man before them would be able to solve the problem.

Just as the duo was worried for Zhang Xuan, the latter, after hearing the question, frowned. "What is the area of damage to the left lung? Can you give me the exact location of the impale? Also, what was the cause of the wound? Do you know the attribute of the assailant's zhenqi?"

"The weapon used to wound that cultivator was a sword. The other party had comprehended Sword Intent, and a portion of the other party's sword qi had penetrated into the cultivator's bloodstream. This was the diagnosis, you can take a look at it!"

Knowing that Zhang Xuan would ask this question, Pavilion Master Kang passed a

book over.

Zhang Xuan casually flipped through it, and recorded in the book was the condition of the cultivator back then.

The content was extremely detailed. Not only was the location of the wound recorded, even the battle technique that was used was recorded clearly.

Zhang Xuan soon finished browsing through the book.

"Have you found a solution yet?" Pavilion Master Kang asked.

"Oh. That's simple, just design a new cultivation route for the cultivator," Zhang Xuan replied.

"New cultivation route?" Pavilion Master Kang's complexion darkened. "You mean... modifying the cultivator's cultivation technique?"

"That's right. Since the wound in the left lung creates a gap in the flow of zhenqi, all that has to be done is to change the route for the flow of zhenqi. With that, the cultivator's cultivation should form a whole once more, and achieving a breakthrough wouldn't be a problem," Zhang Xuan said.

"Modifying the cultivation technique?" Su shi and Ling shi were taken aback. "That would save the hassle of healing the wound, reconnecting the meridians, conditioning the body, and many other steps... In total, it would only require..."

"A single step?"

Chapter 529

What Are You Standing There For? Go and Pour Me a Cup of Water!

Ling shi's treatment required eight steps, Su shi's required seven steps, and even Pavilion Master Kang's would require five steps. Yet, this fellow actually solved the problem using a single step?

"Nonsense! You are dreaming!"

At that moment, Pavilion Master Kang harrumphed coldly. His face was steeled, and the displeasure on it was clear, "Every single cultivation technique that is passed down is created, tested, and refined by innumerable predecessors. How can it be changed that easily? If that cultivator were to try an untested cultivation technique in a wounded state, putting aside whether it would be possible to reach Transcendent Mortal realm or not, their cultivation might even go berserk, thus exacerbating their wounds and putting them at risk of death. As a master teacher, how can you come up with such a flippant solution?"

After hearing the words of the two elders, his expectations of the young man had been lifted. Yet, he didn't expect the other party to answer his question so frivolously.

If a cultivation technique could be modified that easily, then what was the value of a secret art?

Not to mention, there was a foreign zhenqi existent in the other party's body. Without neutralizing it, recovering from one's injuries, and conditioning one's physical body... how could one attempt for a higher cultivation realm?

In the end, the other party failed to live up to his name.

If they were to do so, not only would they fail to save the cultivator, the cultivator would even die because of them. The dignity of the Master Teacher Pavilion would vanish in an instant.

"Berserk? You are overthinking it!"

Waving his hands to interrupt the other party's reprimanding, Zhang Xuan looked at Pavilion Master Kang impassively, "You'll know whether it is effective or not once I tell you the new route for the zhenqi circulation! Upon leaving the dantian, the cultivator's zhenqi will flow through the Taiyi, Guanmen, Liangmen... and finally, it'll gather at Qishe. After three circulations, one should be able to try for Transcendent Mortal realm, and there'll be a ninety percent chance of success!"

Possessing the Heaven's Path Divine Art, Zhang Xuan grasped the very essence of cultivation itself. While modifying a cultivation technique, just like the other party said, was difficult, to him, it wasn't an issue at all.

By slightly modifying the zhenqi route to circumvent the injured portion and mediating the foreign zhenqi in the cultivator's body, reaching Transcendent Mortal realm wouldn't be a problem.

"Flow through Taiyi, Guanmen, and Liangmen..."

The trio frowned.

This zhenqi route was completely unheard of in normal cultivation techniques. Even as 4-star master teachers, they weren't able to deduce its feasibility in an instant.

Every single cultivation technique needed to be tried in action before a conclusion could be made about it. Even master teachers were unable to determine something was feasible or not immediately just by listening to it once.

"You're saying that as long as the cultivator cultivates using this method, she'll be able to achieve a breakthrough immediately?" Pavilion Master Kang's complexion turned even more awful.

It was extremely difficult for even an ordinary cultivator to achieve a breakthrough. To have a severely injured cultivator achieve a breakthrough just by circulating one's zhenqi in the given pathway thrice... You must be joking!

"That's right!"

Zhang Xuan replied nonchalantly, "I've taken a look at the information given, and the cultivator is wounded by searing sword qi. This sword qi carries an exceptionally

sharp edge, and after seeping into the cultivator's body through the wound in her left chest, it was traveling toward her dantian.

"The cultivation technique the cultivator cultivated was the [Great Ancient Incursion Art]. The technique focused heavily on 'sharpness' and 'burst'. Continuous usage of this technique results in the weakening of one's zhenqi, and three consecutive usages will deplete one's zhenqi! This is of similar nature to the searing sword qi in the sense that they are both extremely violent energy that will destroy all that stand their path.

"When the two zhenqi collides with one another, it becomes a case where the stronger energy triumphs. Under normal circumstances, as the cultivator will be able to send in a steady supply of zhenqi to deal with the searing sword qi, it shouldn't pose a problem at all... However, it's a pity that this cultivator's meridians were simply too thin. A violent collision can easily tear them apart, thus crippling her cultivation! Thus, unable to send in a surge of zhenqi to overwhelm the searing sword qi in a single go, a standstill occurred instead. Not only would the searing sword qi be unable to be cleared, the injury would even... worsen over time!"

At this point, Zhang Xuan suddenly stopped. With eyes as sharp as lightning, he said, "If I'm not mistaken, when these symptoms were recorded, it was the seventh day after the cultivator was injured!"

"This..." Pavilion Master Kang was taken aback. "You're right!"

He had dealt with that cultivator's problem personally, and it had always been something he was proud of. Thus, he remembered the details of the incident clearly, and it was indeed the seventh day that the details of the other party's condition were detailed on that book.

Just that, the book only recorded the location of the injury and the battle technique that was used to injure the cultivator... The duration of the injury wasn't written. Could it be that... the young man before him actually deduced the timing based on the content recorded?

"On the seventh day, unable to control the clash of zhenqi in her body, the injury on her left chest was unable to heal and it had even started to rot! Under that situation, given that two violent surges of zhenqi were clashing with one another, forcefully driving her cultivation technique would only exacerbate the collision and aggravate her injuries!"

Zhang Xuan chuckled lightly, "Under normal circumstances, one should first expend all of their zhenqi first... This is equivalent to drawing away the troops away from the point of collision so that the sword qi is able to flow out from the narrow meridian... Only after that should one find some way to neutralize it!"

"That's right..." Su Fan and Ling Yuheng nodded their heads in agreement.

The eight and seven step methods that spoke of respectively consisted of the same procedures as well.

In order to achieve a breakthrough, the cultivator must recover from her injuries first. And to recover from her injuries, one must first solve the issue causing it... And the sword qi was the main problem at hand.

Expending one's own zhenqi was a means of retreat. Only then would the ferocious sword qi lower its guard and come out from the narrow meridian. Once that happened, there would be at least a dozen ways for one to neutralize the sword qi.

Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head as well.

He also solved it in that way back then as well. In fact, he felt that all master teachers would choose the same method when faced with that problem. Was this... incorrect?

"Right? Not only is that wrong, it's a grave mistake!"

Zhang Xuan shook his head, "Removing one's zhenqi is just like moving away a boulder blocking the flow of a stream. While it does allow the sword qi to flow out, you must remember that it is an incomparably sharp searing sword qi. Furthermore, the location of the wound was near the left lung... That location is extremely close to the heart. If the sword qi gushed out and impaled the heart... the cultivator would die on the spot!"

"Die?" Su Fan was taken aback. "But given that the sword qi was trapped for seven days straight, its sharp edge should have already dulled..."

"You're right in saying that it would have become dull. The probability of impaling the heart is probably less than a hundredth. However, what if it didn't follow the usual path of heading toward the Zhuofei meridian via the Huichi acupoint? What if it headed to the Zhenxue meridian instead?"

"This..." Su shi and Ling shi jolted in shock.

Huichi acupoint was the point where the Zhuofei meridian and Zhenxue meridian intersected. The former led to the lung whereas the latter led to the heart.

Even though the sword qi would usually flow down toward the dantian... there was no guarantee that the cultivator, out of worry, would leave a surge of zhenqi within her body.

If so, there was a high possibility that the sword qi may proceed upward and enter the zhenxue meridian instead, thus impaling her heart.

If that was the case, even the deities would be unable to save her.

Pavilion Master Kang's face paled, and his body tightened.

When he first stumbled by the case, all he thought about was how he could cure the cultivator. He didn't think too much about the consequences, and it was only very long later that he realized the presence of this problem. Even though the probability wasn't high... it was still an existent possibility.

It was fortunate that he was lucky then. Otherwise, the cultivator would have been dead by now.

If so, not only would he be unable to become a 4-star master teacher and the pavilion master, he might have even been stripped of his master teacher license and cursed at for innumerable years to come.

However... he had only noticed this problem after reaching 4-star pinnacle, when he looked back at this case... Yet, this young man, with a single glance, actually thought of this possibility... Could the idea of modifying the cultivation technique really be feasible?

Earlier, he thought that the other party was spouting nonsense. But given how the other party was able to consider even this situation... the issue regarding the cultivation technique probably wasn't as easy as he thought.

"My idea doesn't require the cultivator to expend her zhenqi clean beforehand, and neither does the sword qi have to be lured out of the meridian!"

Ignoring the shocked expressions of the trio, Zhang Xuan continued, "Taiyi acupoint is the first point of divergence between the left and right meridians. By having zhenqi flow through here, an energy harmonization could be achieved, thus pulling that sword qi down here. As long as the sword qi travelled down here, the rest would be easy. The Taiyi acupoint is close to the dantian so the cultivator can easily sustain the zhenqi to this area to force the sword qi out of one's body!"

Widening his eyes, Su shi muttered to himself, "If one views the body as a formation, Taiyi is where the life gate is located. When the two zhenqi collides here, the sword qi will very naturally gush out from the acupoint..."

According to the theory of a formation master, the human body could be viewed as a formation as well. It possessed the origin gate, hibernation gate, life gate, impair gate, panorama gate, death gate, closed gate, and fright gate... The Eight Gates.

Taiyi acupoint was the point of connection between the left and right meridian, as well as the location where the life gate of a human's body was located. If one were to gather the sword qi here, it would be easy to drive it out from one's body. Just like that, without wasting a single ounce of energy, one would be able to subdue the sword qi...

It was dozens of times better than the expending of one's zhenqi to forcefully neutralize the sword qi.

"Wait... If the sword qi were to travel here, it would indeed be easy to deal with it. However, what if it didn't?" Pavilion Master Kang frowned.

The sword qi had been colliding with the cultivator's zhenqi for seven days for now. Without withdrawing one's zhenqi, why would the sword qi charge into the Taiyi acupoint?

It was just like having an enemy guarding at the doorway. As long as the enemy didn't retreat, there would be no reason for one to charge forward and put oneself in a position of danger.

"Sigh!"

Hearing the other party's question, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply and shook his head helplessly. "It seems like you have a limited knowledge on the cultivator's [Great Ancient Incursion Art]!"

"I..." Pavilion Master Kang's face reddened.

The Great Ancient Incursion Art was a unique and peculiar cultivation technique. Even though Pavilion Master Kang had heard of it, he had never tried cultivating it, and as such, his knowledge of it was limited.

"The essence of the Great Ancient Incursion Art lies in 'sharpness' and 'burst'. Continuous usage of this technique will result in the weakening of one's zhenqi, and three consecutive usages will deplete one's zhenqi! Just like I've said before, allow the zhenqi to circulate via the new pathway for three times... This way, when the sharpness of the zhenqi disappeared, the sword qi will see it as an opportunity to charge out and wreck one's dantian... And to arrive at one's dantian, one had to travel past the Taiyi acupoint! Surely... you should have at least thought of this," Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

"This..." Pavilion Master Kang's body jolted.

After being jammed for seven days, even though the sword qi possessed no sentience, it would still charge forward as though a spring which had been suppressed with all of its might for the last few days... It wasn't easy for the Great Ancient Incursion Art to become so weak. This was the ideal opportunity to launch an offense, and there was no way for the sword qi to overlook it!

As long as they put some thought into it, all cultivators should be able to think of this.

"But your steps are incomplete! You said that circulating one's zhenqi three times will allow one to attempt a breakthrough to Transcendent Mortal realm. However, up until now, the sword qi has only been removed..." Recovering from his shock, Pavilion Master Kang continued asking slightly doubtfully.

"The sword qi has only been removed? Think deeper into it, the zhenqi circulation method I just told you about..." Zhang Xuan chuckled.

"Upon leaving the dantian, the cultivator's zhenqi will flow through the Taiyi, Guanmen, Liangmen... and finally, it'll gather at Qishe..."

Pavilion Master Kang recalled and recited the content which the young man spoke of previously and his face suddenly warped, "As the cultivator's zhenqi declines and the sword qi pursuits, the duo would reunite once more at Taiyi. After clashing with one another... the sword qi would burst forth from the acupoint while the cultivator's

zhenqi would make use of the momentum from the clash to break open the Guanmen and Liangmen... and finally reach Transcendent Mortal realm?"

"That's equivalent to using the violent might of the sword qi to overcome one's bottleneck. The possibility of success is... indeed no lower than ninety percent!" Su shi felt his throat running dry.

As a 4-star master teacher, he had fully grasped the outcomes that would occur from the different flow of zhenqi within one's body.

Even though the sword qi would be expelled from the life gate when clashing with the cultivator's zhenqi at Taiyi, the violent energy within it would meld into her zhenqi.

Since the enemy who dealt the sword qi to the cultivator was able to hurt her, it could only mean that the person was stronger than her. Going by such, the enemy must be at least a Transcendent Mortal.

The violent energy of a Transcendent Mortal paired with the cultivator's own strength... When the two overlaps with one another, breaking one's bottleneck would become much easier!

In fact, ninety percent seemed to be an underestimation. If that cultivator had done that back then, the success rate would probably be... a hundred percent!

"Y-you..."

Upon thinking of this, everyone widened their eyes in shock.

When they heard of the symptom of the cultivator, what immediately ran through their head was how they could neutralize the zhenqi, condition the cultivator's physical body, and find a way to help her reach Transcendent Mortal realm... Yet, the young man before them actually thought of harnessing the sword qi trapped within the other party's body to create a whole new cultivation technique that could help the cultivator achieve a breakthrough...

More importantly, from the point he finished reading the case to his recitation of the solution, only ten breaths had passed...

How in the world... did he manage to do it?

Was he still a human?

Seeing that the other party has already understood the logic behind his solution, Zhang Xuan asked nonchalantly, "So, can this cultivation technique of mine cure the cultivator and help her achieve a breakthrough?"

"Yes... It can!" Pavilion Master Kang's face paled. Steadying his breath, he slowly nodded his head.

It had taken him only five steps and he had prided himself on it. Yet, the person before him only used a single step...

It seemed like Su shi and Ling shi were right. Even though the person before them was slightly lacking in his cultivation, he was anything but ordinary.

"Then have I answered your question yet?" Zhang Xuan continued asking.

"Yes..." Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head.

"Since I'm right, what are you standing there for?"

With a slightly displeased tone, the young man before him said, "Can't you see that I'm thirsty after talking so much? Go and pour me a cup of water!"

Chapter 530

He Is a Celestial Master Teacher

Putong!

"Pour him a cup of water?"

"He's actually trying to get the pavilion master to pour him a cup of water?"

Hearing those words, Su Fan and Ling Yuheng's mouths twitched violently. In that instant, the two Transcendent Mortal 4-dan experts nearly fell to the ground together.

When they first entered, they told Zhang Xuan clearly that the pavilion master was an austere person, and he had to take note of what he said... Who knew that this fool would actually order him around as though trying to teach a servant a lesson...

The heck!

Are you insane?

The both of us had to plead so hard with him for your slot, do you think that it has been easy for us? Yet, you seem to be trying your best to dump this slot away from you...

Just as tears were trailing down the faces of the duo as they anticipated the wrath of the pavilion master, the usually austere pavilion master suddenly stood up and respectfully replied, "Yes!"

Turning around, he began heating up a pot of water. After which, he took out his most prized tea leaves, filled the cup with it, before passing it over to Zhang Xuan.

"The heck!"

"What... is going on?"

The two 4-star master teachers, Transcendent Mortal 4-dan elders, stared at one

another in astonishment, frenzied by the sight before them.

Pavilion Master Kang was known in the Myriad Kingdom City for his austerity. Even Alliance Head Zhao wouldn't have the privilege of being served tea by him, and yet, despite Zhang Shi speaking to him so impolitely, he still obeyed the other party's command respectfully...

What in the world happened?

Suddenly, Su Shi thought of something and his body trembled violently.

"It's... Impartation of Heaven's Will!"

The main reason why lower ranked master teachers didn't dare to disobey the words of higher ranked master teachers was because of this!

The words of Zhang Shi a moment ago seemed to harness the voice of the heavens, the energy of the soul... Because it wasn't directed at them and they were busy analyzing the case as well, they didn't notice it... But thinking back, that was indeed it!

To actually use Impartation of Heaven's Will against Pavilion Master Kang... and to succeed at that!

What the heck?!

Su Shi and Ling Shi stared at one another, and at this moment, they even felt like dying already.

Pavilion Master Kang was an existence whose Soul Depth had reached at least 14.0. For the number one master teacher in Myriad Kingdom City to fall for Impartation of Heaven's Will... and on top of that, for the one who did so to be a 2-star master teacher who wasn't even twenty yet... If word were to spread out, many people would surely die from shock.

"Hmm?"

While the duo was in shock, Pavilion Master Kang also recovered from his trance and his eyes slowly widened. His cheeks twitched violently, and he nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

To think that the strongest master teacher of the Master Teacher Pavilion would actually be beguiled by the Impartation of Heaven's Will of a 2-star master teacher, and willingly serve the latter tea...

Just the thought of it left him in frenzy.

Just as he was considering what he should do next, the young man before him sipped on the tea served to him and looked at him nonchalantly, "Alright, let's move on to the second question!"

"Second question..."

Pavilion Master Kang's eyelids twitched.

The first question had already made him prey to the other party's Impartation of Heaven's Will. If he were to ask another question, would he be put under the same condition again?

With a righteous expression, Pavilion Master Kang grandly declared, "There's no need for it. The three questions are to test whether you have the qualifications to attend the selection round. Given how your answer for the first question was much more logical than our answers, that proves testimony to your capability. There's no need for the next two questions!"

The main point of the three questions was to test the other party's capability as a master teacher. Given how the other party used a single move to solve a question that would require five moves from his part, not to mention, how he fell prey to the other party's Impartation of Heaven's Will... Just this in itself made him qualified to attend the selection round!

Since that was the case, it was meaningless to proceed on with the other questions. If so, he might as well be magnanimous and allow the other party to pass straight. Otherwise, if he were to be beguiled again, that would truly be embarrassing.

Waving his hands grandly, Pavilion Master Kang turned around and said, "Elder Ling, go and sound the Assembly Bell. Have everyone gather at the Master Teacher Atrium now, we'll conduct the selection round!"

"Yes!" Nodding his head, Elder Ling retreated from the room.

A moment later, a bell chimed loudly in the master Teacher Pavilion. As long as one was a master teacher of Myriad Kingdom Alliance, one had to gather immediately upon hearing the sound.

"Bring Zhang shi to the Master Teacher Atrium. Su shi and I will be going over later!"

Hearing the chime, Pavilion Master Kang knew that the Master Teacher Atrium would be crowded very soon. Thus, he decided to instruct an apprentice outside to Zhang Xuan over first. Upon hearing the instruction, the young man guarding outside came in, bowed respectfully to Zhang Xuan, and led the way.

Knowing that he was heading over to the Master Teacher Atrium for the selection round, Zhang Xuan followed the young man without any complaints.

As the duo left the room, the room abruptly fell silent.

Pavilion Master Kang stared at Elder Su Fan, whom he had been a close friend with for several decades, hesitated for a moment, before asking, "Regarding Zhang shi, do you have anything to say?"

"He... is a 2-star master teacher from Tianwu Kingdom. He isn't twenty yet..." Su shi said.

"That's not what I'm asking!" Pavilion Master Kang's complexion darkened. "I want detailed information. I want to know the reason why you two are so determined to recommend him!"

What the heck?!

You two are elders of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion. Given that person's humble background, how could you have recommended him instead of your own students?

After all, Su shi had a student who had reached 3-star pinnacle as well, and his capability was in no way inferior to Fu Xiaochen.

"This..."

Su shi hesitated for a moment before speaking, "Shall we head to the Chamber of Confidence?"

The Chamber of Confidence was a unique room where secrets were discussed. No matter how powerful one was, it would be impossible for one to eavesdrop on the content discussed from the outside. Thus, there was no need to worry about a single word being leaked out from within.

"Alright!"

With a grim expression, Pavilion Master Kang stood up.

As the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion, he had to come into contact with innumerable secrets. As such, there was a Chamber of Confidence within his room as well. Pushing open the door and walking in, he activated the formation and the duo immediately fell into an absolutely silent atmosphere.

After seating down, Pavilion Master Kang urged, "You may speak now!"

Given how grim Elder Su's expression was, the matter he had to talk about must be of grave importance. Thus, he calmed himself down and prepared himself mentally.

"Twenty days ago, a Rejection of the Ancestors, Sorrowful Chimes of the Bell happened in our Master Teacher Pavilion... Does pavilion master still remember the incident?"

"Given how huge the matter is, how could I forget about it? I've already informed all lower Master Teacher Pavilion to look into the matter... Just that, there have been no results at all. I can't help but suspect whether it might be triggered by the master teachers from the other empires participating in the Master Teacher Tournament."

Pavilion Master Kang nodded.

Back when they were in the midst of conducting a conference, the Teacher Acknowledgement Hall suddenly started trembling non-stop. Even though he had suppressed the news, as someone who had witnessed the massive uproar then, how could he possibly not remember the incident?

"You sent a message to Tianwu Kingdom saying that... if either Kong shi's statue had shaken or the Teacher Acknowledgement Hall had collapsed, report to the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion immediately..." Su shi continued.

"Un! Rejection of the Ancestors, Sorrowful Chimes of the Bell... The most direct manifestation of this situation is the trembling of Kong shi's statue and the collapse of

the Teacher Acknowledgement Hall. If it happened in the region, one can confirm that the exact location of the genius was there then..."

Answering the question, Pavilion Master Kang suddenly froze and his breathing hastened, "Twenty days ago, you were in Tianwu Kingdom... Could it be that the Teacher Acknowledgement Hall there collapsed?"

"That's right! However, due to the possible consequences of the matter, for fear of the news leaking out, I asked them to reply with a 'no' for the time being!" Su shi clasped his fist. "I seek your pardon for that!"

Back then, Su shi had instructed the Tianwu Kingdom Master Teacher Pavilion to reply with a negative then.

Otherwise, if the matter were to blow up, Zhang shi would be in dire danger.

"If the news were to leak, the master teacher responsible for the incident might be in trouble... You made the right call!" Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head.

If he were put in the other party's position, he would have surely done the same as well.

After all, as senior master teachers, they had a duty to protect their talented juniors.

"When the Tianwu Kingdom's Teacher Acknowledgement Hall collapsed... Zhang shi was in the midst of taking the 2-star master teacher examination!" Su shi said.

"You're saying that... he is likely to be the genius who rejected the acknowledgement of the predecessors and triggered the Sorrowful Chimes of the Bell?" Pavilion Master Kang narrowed his eyes.

At this moment, he finally understood why the duo had recommended Zhang Xuan so strongly, even putting their everything on the line. To be able to win the acknowledgement of so many predecessors... How talented must he be?

"Not only so, if I'm not mistaken... Zhang shi is very likely to be a... Celestial Master Teacher!" Su shi said.

In truth, he should have reported this matter to the pavilion master as soon as he returned. The reason why he and Ling shi chose to continue to keep it to themselves

wasn't because they were intentionally hiding the matter but that... they couldn't confirm it at all!

Thus, they had been spending their time flipping through the books to ascertain the facts.

However, it was a pity that there had only been one Celestial Master Teacher in history, and that was Kong shi. Without sufficient information, they couldn't confirm their deductions. Even after spending almost a dozen days buried in books, he and Elder Ling were still completely bewildered.

"What did you say?"

Pavilion Master Kang narrowed his eyes.

"Back when Zhang shi took the master teacher examination, not only did the Teacher Acknowledgement Hall collapse, Kong shi's statue broke as well. Other than the acknowledgement of a Celestial Master Teacher, the Student of a Sage, I can't really think of any other possibility." Su shi explained the happenings he had seen in Tianwu Kingdom.

"Th-this..." Upon hearing of the phenomena that had occurred in Tianwu Kingdom Master Teacher Pavilion, Pavilion Master Kang's lips turned dry.

Even though he couldn't confirm anything at this point, there was a good chance that Zhang shi, the culprit of all of these bizarre happenings, is a Celestial Master Teacher!

Suddenly, he recalled another incident.

"Ten days ago, another acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher occurred. Could it be him as well?"

Several days ago, the phenomenon of 'Trembling of Myriad Tokens, Harmony of the Chimes' occurred in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Alliance, and based on the ancient records, this was a sign of the acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher.

But it was a pity that despite all the effort he had devoted into investigating the matter, there wasn't the slightest news on the matter.

Since Zhang shi was likely to be a Celestial Master Teacher, could it be him this time as well?

"That I'm not too sure, but judging from the timing, I doubt that he was at the capital then..." Su shi shook his head.

Since Zhang shi wasn't at the capital then, it would make it even harder to verify the matter.

"Regardless of whether it is true or not... Given that he's likely to be a Celestial Master Teacher, there shouldn't be a problem in him participating in the tournament. It's just that it's a pity that..."

After a moment of hesitation, Pavilion Master Kang shook his head, "He's still too young, and his cultivation is too weak. He might not be able to match up to the others!"

Even though the other party was a Celestial Master Teacher, an impressive figure recognized by even the heavens... he was still much too young.

Those who could participate in the tournament were all nearing their thirties. With ten years of difference, no matter how talented Zhang shi was, it would still be difficult for him to match up to the others.

"Forget it, let's not think about this matter anymore. In any case, you did well in this matter. Make sure to keep this a secret, don't let anyone find out about it!"

Shaking his head, Pavilion Master Kang decided to shove it aside for the moment. "All of the master teachers should be in place already, let's head over to the Master Teacher Atrium as well!"

"Un!" Su shi stood up, but after taking two steps, he realized that the pavilion master was still stationary behind. Turning around, he saw the latter looking at him with an embarrassed expression.

"Um... regarding the issue of me being beguiled earlier... I hope that you can keep it a secret!"

"..." Su shi.

Chapter 531

I Am That Dolt

Following behind the young man, Zhang Xuan soon arrived at a vast room—the Master Teacher Atrium.

The location where mass conferences involving all of the master teachers within the Myriad Kingdom City was held. Even before entering the room, Zhang Xuan could already see that the interior was packed with people.

Many people were walking to and fro as they proceeded to their seats.

At the entrance of the hall, the young man leading the way said, "Zhang shi, please put on your robe and emblem..."

"Un!"

This was an assembly area for master teachers. Naturally, one had to don the attire that represented one's identity so as to not be out of place.

With a flick of his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out a robe and donned it. At the same time, he pinned his emblem on his chest.

He had never worn this costume ever since he received it after passing the master teacher examination in Tianwu Kingdom. It wasn't because he was intentionally trying to conceal his identity but that he was too used to be tighter fitting clothes from his previous life. The robe seemed much too inconvenient to him in comparison.

After tidying up his clothes, he followed behind the crowd and walked in.

Even though Zhang Xuan knew that there were many master teachers gathered here, the staggering number of people within still shocked him.

Taking a brief glance, there were at least five hundred master teachers in here!

Five hundred master teachers gathered in a single place... Just the thought of it felt

inconceivable.

But even so, given that this was the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, this much was to be expected.

On top of that, the allure of the Master Teacher Tournament was also immense. Almost all of the slightly more powerful master teachers had gathered here. Those who weren't here were master teachers who remained in their respective kingdoms to guard against unexpected situations, but even so, they numbered in the minority. All in all, the total number of master teachers in the alliance should be under a thousand.

Considering the massive combined population of all of the vassal states, be it Conferred Kingdoms, Tier 1 Kingdoms, Tier 2 Kingdoms, and Unranked Kingdoms-it definitely exceeded ten billion at the very least-and the huge proportion of cultivators among them, the proportion of master teacher was truly humble in comparison.

The young man guiding Zhang Xuan wasn't a master teacher yet, so he didn't tag along. Thus, Zhang Xuan walked into the room along with the group.

There were innumerable rows of tables and chairs placed within. The front rows only had twenty to thirty chairs, and the further back it was, the more chairs there were.

"It seems like the seating arrangement depends on one's identity..."

With just a glance, Zhang Xuan immediately understood.

Even though master teachers propagate the rise of all men, there was still a strict hierarchy among its ranks.

The front seats were reserved for only 4-star master teachers, followed by 3-star, then 2-star...

Given that Zhang Xuan was only a 2-star master teacher at the moment, he could only sit at the back.

Even so, it didn't matter much to him. Since the selection round was about to be conducted soon, he probably wouldn't spend too long seated here.

After searching around for a bit, he finally found the 2-star master teacher region and sat down.

"What's happening? Why is there such a sudden assembly?"

"I'm not too sure either. However, I heard a few days ago that a selection round for the candidates of the Master Teacher Tournament is going to be held. Perhaps, they intend to conduct it before all of us!"

"That's possible! But I wonder who will be chosen this time around..."

"Need that be said? Of course, it's Fu Xiaochen, Fu shi!"

"That might not necessarily be the case. I think Ruohuan gongzi stands a better chance. After all, he's my idol!"

...

Upon sitting down, Zhang Xuan immediately noticed the discussions around him.

Ever since the pavilion master announced the selection round ten days ago, there had been many discussions and disputes on who would be chosen to represent the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. All kinds of rumors went around, and some were even gambling on the matter.

Due to the small community, most master teachers knew one another, and they had their own supporters and aides.

Listening to the conversation of others for a while, just like what Su shi and Ling shi said, it seemed like Ruohuan gongzi and Fu Xiaochen were the most popular candidates.

The duo held an extraordinary position among the Myriad Kingdom Alliance master teachers.

Following the gazes of the other master teachers, he saw a few figures who were clearly in the center of attention even among the large crowd of master teachers.

One of them was a dashing gentleman who held a foldable fan in his hands. The stark contrast between his crimson lips and white teeth seemed to accentuate his charm, and there was a bright glow in his eyes. Judging from the aura around him, his cultivation seemed to be above average.

"It seems like that is Ruohuan gongzi, Jun Ruohuan!"

Zhang Xuan had been intrigued as to why he, as a master teacher, wasn't addressed as 'Jun shi' but 'Ruohuan gongzi' instead.

But after seeing the other party with his own eyes, he finally understood the reason. If not for the master teacher robe on the other party, it would be hard to imagine that he was an unparalleled talent who had already reached a rank of 4-star.

And on the same row, not too far away from Ruohuan gongzi, stood a young man. Even though there were only three stars on his emblem, he didn't lose out to the former in terms of disposition at all.

His appearance was average, and there were even some traces of baby fat on his face, giving him a chubby look. However, his eyes were sharp and the aura he exuded exerted an immense pressure on those around him. His cultivation could only be higher than Jun Ruohuan, and based on Zhang Xuan's estimation, it was probably at Transcendent Mortal 4-dan!

This should be the famous Fu Xiaochen!

Just as Zhang Xuan wanted to assess the other three of his candidates, he heard a laughter by his ear, "This friend here, I've never seen you around here. May I know which country you come from?"

Turning to look at the origin of the voice, it came from the young man who was seated beside Zhang Xuan.

He seemed to be in his thirties, and there were two stars shining brightly on his emblem.

"Tianxuan Kingdom!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"Tianxuan? What tier is it?" The young man scratched his head in confusion.

"It doesn't have a tier, so it is considered as unranked!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"Unranked Kingdom?" The young man was taken aback. After which, he immediately chuckled awkwardly, "To be able to become a 2-star master teacher at your age despite coming from such a place, you are indeed extraordinary!"

Knowing that this was just pleasantries, Zhang Xuan smiled, not saying much in response.

Even though he had passed by Tianwu and Xuanyuan in his journey, if one had to talk about his origin, it was Tianxuan.

"The Master Teacher Tournament is a huge event for us master teachers. No matter the price, we have to at least come here to spectate it!" Seeing that Zhang Xuan's lack of response, the young man changed the topic.

"Indeed!" Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Judging from how many master teachers had come just for this event, it was indeed an event of unprecedented scale.

Given that so many master teachers were gathered here, if they could converse with one another, trade ideas, and learn from one another, it would surely be immensely beneficial to their future growth. Most probably, this was the main reason behind the establishment of the tournament in the first place.

"Right, regarding the selection round, who do you think will emerge victorious?" the young man asked excitedly.

"Who do I think will emerge victorious? I don't really know." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Right, you only arrived recently so it's normal for you to not know much! You should have heard the discussions of others as well. Ruohuan gongzi and Fu Xiaochen are currently the two most popular candidates. Ruohuan gongzi came from the leading family of the Four Great Clans, the Jun Clan, and on top of that, he's one of the Four Gentlemen of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. Even Alliance Head Zhao's son, Crown Prince Zhao Hui, is overshadowed by him. On the other hand, Fu Xiaochen is the direct disciple of Elder Hai. Of all of the candidates, they are indeed the most likely to win."

The young man said. "However, I think the one who stands the greatest chance is actually Elder Feng's student, Feng Mosheng."

"Feng Mosheng?"

"That's right. I've seen Feng shi once, and even though he's a very humble and low-

profile person, his cultivation is one of the most impressive I've seen! Three years ago, when I had the privilege to receive guidance from him, he was already a 3-star pinnacle master teacher. It's hard to imagine how far he has reached since then!" Speaking of Feng shi, the young man's eyes glowed in admiration.

"As for the remaining two, I heard that they came from other kingdoms. One of them is known as Luo Xi, and a beautiful female master teacher. The other one is Du Hu... I don't know much about their strength, but judging from how they were specially chosen as candidates for the tournament, they must be extraordinary as well!"

At which, the young man suddenly lowered his voice secretively and said, "Also, I heard that the total number of candidates for this selection round isn't five but six! The announcement for the selection round has been made ten days ago by the pavilion master but it ended up being dragged until now. According to the rumors, the reason for that is because that sixth person isn't here yet!"

"Oh? You know that person?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"My teacher is one of the elders and he attended the conference regarding the selection of the candidates. That sixth person was highly recommended by Su shi and Ling shi, and if I'm not mistaken, his name is... Zhang Xuan!"

At which, the young man harrumphed, "If not for this fellow, the selection round would have been held long ago. He sure is a dolt!"

"Cough cough, a dolt?" Zhang Xuan coughed.

"The Master Teacher Tournament is such an important affair and yet that fellow was still late for it. To keep so many master teachers waiting like that... It is one thing if he's truly formidable but according to what I know, he's only a 2-star master teacher. On top of that, he seems to be quite young at that... To disrespect one's elders like that, what else can he be if not a dolt? If not for Su shi and Ling shi acting as a guarantor for him, he would have long been stripped of his slot!"

The young man spoke contemptuously.

"I see!" Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

To be called a dolt right to his face, Zhang Xuan had no idea what he should say.

Even so, back then, Su shi told him that it would suffice as long as he made it to the Myriad Kingdom City within three months. How could he have known that there would be a selection round?

"I'm not the only one who thinks so, the others share the same thought as well! If I knew what that person looks like, I'd definitely beat him up when I meet him!" The young man spoke ferociously. "If I hadn't been waiting for him, I would have long gone into seclusion to attempt for a breakthrough in my cultivation already. It is his fault that I ended up dragging the matter out until now..."

Not expecting that his tardiness would bring him so much hostility, Zhang Xuan flashed a bitter smile. Just as he was about to speak, the entire hall suddenly fell silent. Lifting his head, he saw Pavilion Master Kang and Su shi walking into the room.

"I believe most of you all should have guessed the reason behind the chiming of the Assembly Bell!"

Pavilion Master Kang waved his hands grandly, "That's right, the selection round for the Master Teacher Tournament will be conducted today. The reason why I gathered everyone here today is so that everyone can bear witness to the event!"

"As I expected, it's the selection round!"

"Does that mean that master teacher, Zhang Xuan, is here as well?"

"He's here? Where is he?"

...

Hearing the confirmation from the pavilion master, the crowd began whispering amongst themselves, some of them began looking around.

"The Master Teacher Tournament is a major event conducted by the vassal empires under Huanyu Empire Master Teacher Pavilion. I believe I need not say anything about our past results, everyone here should know about them... It happens that we're the host this time, so I hope that we can break out of our slump this time and bring some glory to our branch!"

Pavilion Master Kang's eyes scanned through the crowd.

"Yes!"

Hearing those words, even though most of the master teachers were not going to participate in the event, their faces still reddened in agitation, and they clenched their fists tightly.

As master teachers of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, they couldn't help but feel frustrated upon seeing their Master Teacher Pavilion being ranked at the bottom each time.

As the host this time around, they were determined to not allow history to repeat itself. Otherwise, how could they face their predecessors in the Teacher Acknowledgement Hall?

"Alright, all of you, come up!"

After which, Pavilion Master Kang beckoned, and Ruohuan gongzi, Fu Xiaochen, and the others walked up.

There was a total of five people.

"Hmm? Where's Zhang shi?" Seeing that Zhang Xuan wasn't with him, Pavilion Master Kang's eyebrows shot up.

...

"Hehe, look. The selection round is about to start but that dolt Zhang Xuan isn't here yet. I sure hope that the pavilion master will strip him of his qualification for his lack of respect..."

Seeing Pavilion Master Kang looking around in search for that Zhang shi, the young man harrumphed coldly and shook his head. Then, upon suddenly realizing something, he turned to look at the acquaintance he had just met and asked, "Right, brother, despite talking for so long, I don't think I've heard your name yet!"

"My name?" Zhang Xuan smiled bitterly as he stood up.

"It seems that... I am the dolt you spoke of... Zhang Xuan!"

Chapter 532

The Selection Begins!

"Y-you... are Zhang Xuan, Zhang shi?"

The young man shuddered as tears streamed down his face. He nearly fainted on the spot.

Even though he had spoken badly of Zhang Xuan, he also knew that someone who was so strongly recommended by Su shi and Ling shi was anything but ordinary. Most probably, this Zhang shi wasn't just an ordinary 2-star master teacher.

Just that... as a fellow 2-star master teacher, he couldn't help but feel jealous by the other party's candidacy. This was also why he found himself pouring out all of his grudges upon seeing a stranger. If it had been someone he was familiar with, he would definitely be unable to do the same.

In any case, he didn't know the person anyway. Thus, he began talking to vent his frustration but never in his dreams could he have imagined that... not only did he accurately find the person in question, he even called the other party a dolt to his face!

What the heck?!

Aren't you going to participate in the selection round? Shouldn't you be seated with Ruohuan gongzi, Fu Xiaochen, and the others? Why are you sitting here with us?

The young man only saw lightning flashing through his head, and at that moment, even suicidal thoughts were popping up in his head.

What the heck was this... He just wanted to grab a stranger to complain to, and he just had to pick this Zhang shi of all people... Wasn't his luck too poor?!

Just as he was worried that the other party might pick a bone with him, Zhang shi stepped away and walked to the front.

"He isn't blaming me for it?"

Seeing that the other party didn't say a word to him before leaving, the young man widened his mouth in disbelief.

Master teachers valued their reputation highly and being insulted as a dolt to his face was an immense humiliation. If the other party were to blow up the matter, he would have no choice but to just bear the consequences... But the other party simply walked away without saying a thing. This magnanimity was something that most master teachers weren't equipped with.

"I wonder... if he will be picked..."

Suppressing his frustration, the master teacher turned his gaze to the stage.

...

"He's Zhang Xuan?"

"He seems younger than what the rumors depict him out to be!"

"Indeed. He's not even twenty yet, and on top of that, he's only a 2-star master teacher. What rights does he have to participate in the selection round?"

"That might not necessarily be the case. Even though he's wearing the 2-star emblem, his capability might not necessarily be just that of a 2-star master teacher.

"You're right... Without true capability, Su shi and Ling shi wouldn't have recommended him with such determination. But even if he isn't just a 2-star master teacher, given his age, his capability should still be severely limited!"

...

Everyone stared at the young man who just walked up to the stage in incredulity.

They had long heard that Zhang shi was young... but only witnessing his appearance first-hand did the image really strike them.

Discernment ability and knowledge were important to a master teacher, but more important than that was knowledge far surpassing ordinary cultivators.

No matter how talented this young man was, given that he had a decade less than the

others to study, how much knowledge could he possibly have accrued?

"Since everyone is present, I shall begin explaining the rules of the selection round!"

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was here, Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head. Surveying the crowd, he began explaining the details of the selection round. "There will be a total of five rounds, and they will be related to the various fundamentals a master teacher should possess! It'll be presented in the form of a competition, and the first place will earn six points, the second place will earn five points, so on and so forth.

"The two candidates who are ranked at the top in terms of points at the end of the five tests will be selected to represent Myriad Kingdom Alliance in the Master Teacher Tournament!"

At which, Pavilion Master Kang waved his hands and asked, "Is there anyone who has any doubts?"

"No!" everyone hurriedly replied.

Jun Ruohuan and the candidates also shook their heads.

"I've already designed the tests with the other elders, and they'll be targeted at one's Soul Depth, comprehension of cultivation technique, memory, knowledge impartation, and guidance respectively."

Seeing that no one had any doubts, Pavilion Master Kang traded glances with the elders in the front row and nodded his head. "We'll begin the first round now, the test of Soul Depth. Elder Wu, I'll be troubling you!"

"Pavilion master, there's no need to stand on ceremony. It is only right that I do this!"

An elder chuckled as he walked up to the stage. Flicking his wrist, an ancient zither appeared in his hands.

"To think that Elder Wu would be sent out for the very first round!" someone in the hall commented.

"Why? Is there something special about Elder Wu?" The person beside him asked doubtfully.

"Of course! Elder Wu is a 4-star pinnacle master teacher just like the pavilion master, but... he has a very unique supporting occupation. That occupation is extremely useful for tempering one's Soul Depth!" replied the first person.

"Oh? What kind of occupation could be useful in tempering one's Soul Depth?" asked the second person curiously.

The most fundamental aspect of a master teacher was their Soul Depth. The higher one's Soul Depth, the easier for them to comprehend the essence of a master teacher. What kind of supporting occupation did Elder Wu have to make him noteworthy even among the other 4-star pinnacle master teachers?

"Demonic tunist!" the first person replied.

"Demonic tunist? You mean that unique occupation that can muddle a person's consciousness with music?" The second person was taken aback.

"Un!" The first person nodded his head. "Even though demonic tunist is only an occupation of the Lower Nine Paths, they are capable of using music to bewitch one's heart, making it hard to guard against. Our Myriad Kingdom City doesn't have a Demonic Tunist Guild, so Elder Wu's occupation is rather rare here!"

"To actually send a demonic tunist up to test the candidates' Soul Depth, just the first round in itself is difficult!" the second person remarked.

In normal master teacher examinations, a Stone of Insight would be used to test one's Soul Depth, and the one with the higher number would emerge victorious. The difficulty was clearly much higher now that a demonic tunist was involved.

...

In the midst of the discussion of the duo below, Elder Wu had already placed his zither down on a table and turned his gaze to the candidates.

"The first round will test your Soul Depth! As a master teacher, not only should one's Soul Depth be high, more importantly, one must be capable of thinking and operating rationally when put in a distracting environment! Under the request of the pavilion master, I'm here to test your Soul Depth. Naturally, I'll give it my all, so you all should be mentally prepared."

After which, he flicked his wrist again and a few round-shaped metal plates appeared on the table.

"This is a blank formation plate that formation masters often use. Later, I'll play a Demonic Tune of Psychosis which muddles one's consciousness, and you all will have to inscribe on the formation plate under such a state. At the end of the tune, you will be judged on your progress in the inscription and the exquisiteness of your strokes!"

Elder Wu glanced at the candidates and said, "I'll just say it first, my Demonic Tune of Psychosis will only work on one person at a time. Who wants to go first?"

"What an insane test!"

"I've heard of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis in a book before. It can muddle one's mind, leaving one unable to think properly. If a normal cultivator were to fall for it, he'll be left in a state similar to heavy intoxication. Under the state where one can't even differentiate directions, how could one possibly inscribe anything at all..."

"Indeed! Even standing upright will be a challenge then, for one to inscribe exquisite strokes on a palm-sized formation plate..."

"More importantly, the formation plate used for the test is of grade-3. Not only will one have to be of clear mind to inscribe on it, the force used is also of absolute importance. Otherwise, there's a high chance that it might shatter!"

"This test isn't just on one's Soul Depth. It is also assessing one's ability to control their strength in a confused state... Difficult, this test is extremely difficult!"

...

After hearing the content of Elder Wu's test, many master teachers below breathed in a large mouthful of cold air.

There was a good reason for the fame of the demonic tunist despite being just a Lower Nine Paths occupation! Under the onslaught of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis, it would already be difficult for one to resist its effects and maintain composure. To inscribe on a blank formation plate on top of that...

The difficulty was immense!

Putting aside the candidates, even the 4-star elders seated at the front row would find it hard to do so.

"Demonic tunist? Inscribe?"

Contrary to everyone's shock, Zhang Xuan frowned.

In the books that he had flipped through, there were some records on demonic tunists, but they were extremely brief. As such, he wasn't too sure about the abilities they possessed.

He had always thought that demonic tunist were similar to painters, just that their area of specialization was music. But from the looks of it, it wasn't as simple as he thought.

After hearing Elder Wu's explanation, Ruohuan gongzi turned to look at his competitors, curious to see their reactions.

Fu Xiaochen had a calm expression, seemingly expecting that there would be such a test. Thus, he was currently conditioning himself in preparation for it.

The others were also driving their Soul Depth, preparing themselves for the test with a solemn expression. Only a young man had his eyebrows knitted together in confusion.

It was the person who had kept them waiting for several days, Zhang Xuan.

"It is obvious that he has never heard of demonic tunists before!"

Seeing the other party's confused expression, Ruohuan gongzi knew that the other party had never heard of demonic tunists before. To think that he, despite being one of the Four Gentlemen and a 4-star primary master teacher, would end up competing with such a fellow...

Just the thought of it left him frustrated.

Chuckling softly, Ruohuan gongzi said, "You are Zhang shi, right? Even though you kept us waiting for quite a while, you still came from afar. As a guest... it's only right for us to allow you to go first!"

"Me?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "There's no need to stand on ceremonies. If you wish, feel free to go. I'll just take a look first!"

There was no occupation within the Nine Paths that was ordinary. Since Zhang Xuan had never come into contact with demonic tunists before, he hoped to see the situation first before deciding on his next course of action.

"Take a look first?"

Ruohuan gongzi sneered, "Do you think that since Elder Wu is currently energized and that the one to go first will suffer the heaviest impact?"

"Since this is a test of one's Soul Depth, one should brave forward! To be hesitant, it only shows that you are worried and fearful. With such a huge gap in your mental fortitude, how can you expect to achieve good results? You must be joking!"

Since this was a test of one's Soul Depth, going first and going last could make a difference in one's state of mind and thus results.

If one were to hesitate for fear that one would suffer the brunt of the blow from going first, it could only go to show that there was a huge flaw in one's mental fortitude.

And the moment there was a flaw in one's mental fortitude, one would succumb easily to the Demonic Tune of Psychosis.

Ruohuan gongzi was intentionally saying those words so as to affect Zhang Xuan's confidence and state of mind.

Since they were competitors, he had no intentions of going easy on the others.

"Since you are fearful, allow me to go first then!"

After striking at Zhang Shi's confidence, Ruohuan gongzi chuckled softly and walked up to the table, preparing to pick up the blank formation plate.

"Ruohuan gongzi, why don't you allow me to go first instead?"

An impassive voice sounded. Then, Fu Xiaochen walked up to the table as well.

He was already done conditioning his mental state. His expression was peaceful, and

at this moment, it seemed as though nothing in the world could shake him.

"You wish to compete with me?" Ruohuan gongzi's eyebrows shot up.

"Compete? You're overthinking it. Given Elder Wu's strength, it doesn't matter whether one goes first or last. The effect of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis will surely be the same... The nifty tricks you use on others won't work on me," Fu Xiaochen replied impassively.

Chapter 533

Demonic Tune of Psychosis

As a 4-star pinnacle master teacher and a 4-star demonic tunist, his control over his strength had already reached an astonishing level. Since this was a fair competition, how could he possibly vary the intensity of his attacks for the candidates?

The words that Ruohuan gongzi said previously were clearly an attempt to shoot down Zhang shi's confidence. This might be useful against someone who came from a remote area, but to him, Fu Xiaochen, it was completely futile.

"Since you understand that, you should know that I won't compromise on anything I've decided upon!" Ruohuan gongzi said.

"I'm the same as well!" Fu Xiaochen replied.

Before the test had begun, the duo had already collided with one another.

"Oh? Since that's the case, why don't we compete to see who goes first then?" Ruohuan gongzi said.

"Sure! What do you want to compete on?" Fu Xiaochen nodded.

The two of them were equally matched, and they were both contenders for the championship.

Thus, they had been thinking of how they could suppress the other party right from the start so that it would be difficult for the other party to make a comeback later on.

"Let's compete on..." After a moment of contemplation, Ruohuan gongzi was just about to say the content of the competition when a melody suddenly sounded.

Tzing!

Turning around, unknowingly, Feng Mosheng had already stepped forward, picked up a formation plate, and seated down on the floor, ready to take the test. Elder Wu's

hands were also on the ancient zither, and lightly plucking at it, a melodious tune sounded.

"What the heck?!"

Not expecting their slight moment of distraction would grant another an opportunity to go first, Fu Xiaochen and Jun Ruohuan's faces steeled, and an urge to spurt blood welled up in them.

What the heck was this?!

He wanted to strike down on the other party's confidence so as to affect his performance, only to end up giving away the initiative to someone else.

"Hmph!"

Knowing that there was no use arguing anymore, the duo flung their arms and returned back to where they were.

Weng weng weng!

Upon sitting down, Wu shi began plucking his zither, and a tune that seemed to strike deep within one's heart gushed over as though a rampaging torrent.

"This music... Nothing seems to be wrong about it?"

The music sounded a little upbeat, but other than that, there didn't seem to be anything wrong about it. Zhang Xuan didn't feel any signs of him being controlled, and his mind didn't seem to be breached by anything as well.

But taking a look at Feng Mosheng, he knew that it wasn't as simple as he thought.

The latter, as a 3-star pinnacle master teacher, had a Soul Depth exceeding 11.0. Even so, upon hearing the melody of the zither, sweat began dripping down his forehead. He seemed to be under great pressure.

"It seems like there's an area of effect to the zither melody. Beyond that area, even if one hears the melody, one won't feel anything at all..."

A glint flashed across Zhang Xuan's eyes.

Elder Wu had said previously that he would test the candidates one by one. From the looks of it now, it seemed like there was a limit to the attack range of the zither melody. Beyond that area, the melody would just be like normal music.

Hu!

While the other candidates couldn't feel anything at all, Feng Mosheng, who was bearing the brunt of the impact of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis, went pale. With trembling hands, he took out a carving knife and 'jiya!', he started carving on the formation plate.

The Demonic Tune of Psychosis played by the demonic tunist resounded in his mind, leaving him faint-headed and unable to concentrate. As such, the carving knife in his hand was also slightly shaky.

"As expected, it isn't as easy as I thought..."

Seeing how even a genius like the other party was facing such immense difficulty, Zhang Xuan's expression turned grim.

As expected of a selection round conducted by the Myriad Kingdom City. Just the first round was sufficient to leave many in despair already.

Suddenly, a thought appeared in Zhang Xuan's mind.

'Does this Demonic Tune of Psychosis have a weakness?'

Since a cultivator executing a battle technique and a formation master setting up a formation could both compile a corresponding book on it, given that a demonic tunist was in the midst of playing a melody, a book should be able to be compiled on it as well!

Muttering 'flaws' softly, Zhang Xuan's mind jolted and a book appeared before him.

"Wu Xu, an elder of Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion. 4-star master teacher, demonic tunist, formation master, painter, and tea master. Specializes in using offense via demonic tunes, of which, the Demonic Tune of Psychosis..."

"Flaws:..."

Flipping through pages, Zhang Xuan swiftly found some content concerning the Demonic Tune of Psychosis.

"I see!"

A gleam flashed across Zhang Xuan's eyes as he chuckled.

This Demonic Tune of Psychosis may seem extremely fearsome but it had its flaws too. As long as Zhang Xuan used it properly, it wouldn't be too difficult to break it.

Soon, after reading through the book, an idea appeared in Zhang Xuan's mind.

'I'll try it later on!'

Knowing that it wasn't the time for him to try out his idea yet, Zhang Xuan placed the thought aside and turned his attention back to the test. At this moment, the Demonic Tune of Psychosis was already reaching its end, and Feng Mosheng seemed as though he was completely intoxicated. His body wobbled violently even though he was already seated down.

He seemed to have inscribed quite a bit on the formation plate in his hands, but from Zhang Xuan's current position, it was hard to see what the other party had inscribed clearly.

Weng!

With a light pluck, the zither melody finally came to an end.

"Wu shi, thank you for going easy on me!"

Shaking his head, Feng Mosheng stood up, clasped his fists and bowed before passing the formation plate over.

He could tell that the other party didn't give it his all. Otherwise, given his current level of Soul Depth, it would have been impossible for him to withstand the entire tune.

"Un!" Nodding his head, Wu shi passed the formation plate to a master teacher standing beside him.

After grabbing over the formation plate, the master teacher began counting and

reported the result, "A total of 432 strokes, and every stroke is of equal depth!"

"More than 400 strokes?"

"Impressive! Even though he was clearly at his limit, he was still able to leave so many strokes behind. Not to mention, they are all of the equal depth as well. As expected of a genius qualified to participate in the selection round!"

"If it was me, I would surely be unable to inscribe even a single stroke..."

"Don't worry. Given your qualifications, Elder Wu probably couldn't even be bothered to lay his hands on you!"

"You..."

...

Upon hearing the results, a huge uproar spread across the crowd.

The Demonic Tune of Psychosis had only lasted for three minutes. Even though there was no specific rule dictating what one should inscribe, to be able to inscribe more than 400 strokes within such a short period of time was indeed impressive, not to mention, one had to do it while warding off the offense of the melody.

"More than four hundred strokes?"

"It seems like I underestimated this fellow. To think that he would achieve such impressive results!"

Ruohuan gongzi and Fu Xiaochen frowned.

Even they couldn't help but feel pressured by Feng Mosheng's result.

"Alright, the next one!"

After announcing Feng Mosheng's result, Wu shi conditioned his physical state for a few breaths, and after recovering, he turned to look at the crowd.

Given his current capability, it would have been difficult for him to use the Demonic Tune of Psychosis to subdue a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan expert in a real battle.

However, given that there was no battle involved in this test, he was still able to keep up.

"Allow me!" Fu Xiaochen walked over.

This time, Ruohuan gongzi didn't vie with him. It wasn't that he didn't want to go but that Feng Mosheng's result had exerted some pressure on him. He wanted to condition himself to be in his best state before challenging it.

Tzing!

The zither began playing once more, and the sound of a carving knife cutting a formation plate sounded as well.

Soon, the test came to an end, and Fu Xiaochen retreated back.

The master teacher reported the result.

"A total of 427 strokes. The strokes are clear and there's no repetitions."

"Such a pity..." Shaking his head, Fu Xiaochen's complexion wasn't too good.

He thought that, given his ability, winning the selection round shouldn't be a problem at all. He didn't expect that he would lost out to this Feng Mosheng at the very first round.

A difference of five strokes!

But only when experiencing the Demonic Tune of Psychosis itself did he realize how fearsome it was. If not for the desire of victory pushing him on, he would have surely succumbed halfway through.

Fu Xiaochen quickly calmed down.

'Even though my results aren't as good as Feng shi's, it isn't too far as compared to him. It'll depend on Ruohuan gongzi's result now. If his result is worse than mine, I'll still stand a very good chance in earning one of the two slots!'

Two people were to be selected in the selection round, and this was only the first round. As long as he didn't make any errors later on, it shouldn't be too difficult for

him to get one of the slots.

"Allow me!"

The third one to challenge wasn't Ruohuan gongzi but the beautiful female master teacher, Luo Xi!

In terms of appearance, this lady could only be said to be decent. She was a far match from Princess Mo Yu and Zhao Feiwu, needless to say, Zhao Ya.

However, as a 3-star pinnacle master teacher, a Transcendent Mortal 3-dan expert, she had a unique disposition that accentuated her beauty.

This beautiful lady may seem weak, but her Soul Depth was exceptionally strong. She also managed to survive through the entirety of Elder Wu's Demonic Tune of Psychosis.

After Luo Xi, the other foreign master teacher, Du Hu, went up.

The duo managed to achieve a result exceeding four hundred strokes, but they were still a distance away from matching up to Fu Xiaochen, let alone Feng Mosheng.

"A dark horse!"

"Indeed. Who could have known that this Feng shi would be so formidable!"

"Even Fu shi's result is unable to match up to him... I truly never expected this to happen!"

"I told you all that Feng shi is a strong contender as well, you all just refused to believe me."

...

Even after four candidates had challenged the test, Feng Mosheng was still ranked in first place. This result had left all of the master teachers shocked.

Initially, they thought that the slots would surely go to Ruohuan gongzi and Fu shi. Who could have thought that Feng Mosheng would be so formidable as well?

It seemed like Feng shi's low profile had indeed made a lot of people underestimate him.

"Look, it's Ruohuan gongzi's turn!"

Just as everyone was astounded by the previous results, someone shouted out and everyone immediately turned their attention back to the stage.

At that moment, Ruohuan gongzi was already seated down with the formation plate right before him. He held onto a carving knife in his hands.

Tzing! Tzing!

The melody of a zither sounded.

Frowning, Ruohuan gongzi swiped the carving knife across the formation plate swiftly.

"Fast!"

"As expected of Ruohuan gongzi, it seems like the zither is ineffective on him!"

"Looks like the champion of this test will surely be Ruohuan gongzi!"

...

Seeing Ruohuan gongzi's actions, everyone clenched their fists tightly.

To be capable of moving so swiftly under the influence of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis, as expected of the most popular candidate, one of the Four Gentlemen of Myriad Kingdom City!

Hu!

Soon, the melody came to an end.

Ruohuan gongzi came to a stop. After keeping the carving knife in his storage ring, he passed the formation plate forward.

"A total of 431 strokes!" The master teacher counted for several times before announcing in disbelief.

"A stroke less than Feng shi?"

"How is that possible?"

"That can't be, his hands moved so quickly then!"

...

Upon hearing the result, a huge commotion broke out among the crowd.

Everyone had seen Ruohuan gongzi's carving speed previously... How could his result possibly be inferior to Feng shi?

But the invigilator checking on the formation plate was extremely well-known in the Master Teacher Pavilion for being impartial. It was impossible for him to be biased.

"Ruohuan gongzi doesn't seem to be too disappointed..."

Just as everyone was perplexed by the situation before them, someone amidst the crowd suddenly muttered in disbelief. Everyone turned their gazes over, and as expected, they noticed that something was amiss.

When Fu shi's result was worse than Feng shi's, he was clearly depressed. On the other hand, not only did Ruohuan gongzi not seem defeated at all, he even had a faint smile hanging on his face.

A smile?

What was going on?

Did he not care whether he won or lost?

Chapter 534

Elder Wu's Complete Breakdown (1)

That was impossible!

There were only five rounds for the selection, and every single round was of utmost importance. This concerned whether one would obtain the final slot or not. Even if Ruohuan gongzi knew that he would pass the selection round for sure, he couldn't possibly be content with being in second place.

After all, the ultimate goal was the Master Teacher Tournament. If he couldn't even be the champion for a selection round, how could he possibly fare well in the tournament?

Amidst perplexed gazes, Ruohuan gongzi walked up to Zhang Xuan with a smile and said, "It's your turn..."

Only then did everyone realize that it was Zhang shi's turn.

"To be recommended so strongly by Su shi and Ling shi, he must possess some outstanding capability!"

"Look at his age, how capable can he be? I worry whether that fellow can survive until the end of the melody or not!"

"If he can't even withstand it until the end, it would indeed be embarrassing!"

"Indeed!"

...

Seeing that it was Zhang shi's turn, everyone tore their gazes away from Ruohuan gongzi onto the new contender.

In truth, they were rather curious about this mysterious young man.

To come late even for an event as important as the selection round, was he truly that confident or was it just plain arrogance?

Ignoring the glee on Ruohuan gongzi's face, Zhang Xuan stepped forward and picked up the formation plate.

Even though he was a quasi 4-star formation master, the only blank formation plate he had come into contact with was the grade-5 formation plate which he inscribed into a Spirit Gathering Formation. This was his first time seeing such a low-grade formation plate.

Holding it in his hand, he could clearly feel that the material was much softer than a grade-5 formation plate. Clearly, the quality of the material was at completely different levels.

Walking over to the location where the previous competitors sat down earlier, Zhang Xuan scanned the surroundings for a moment and did a quick mental calculation. Then, scratching his head, he asked sheepishly, "I apologize but can I affix this formation plate on the wall?"

"Affix?"

Elder Wu was taken aback. "As long as it's convenient for you, feel free!"

The main point of the test was to test one's resilience under the onslaught of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis. The formation plate was just a means to gauge one's consciousness. Whether it was affixed onto the wall or within one's hand, it didn't make a difference at all.

"Thank you!"

Receiving the other party's agreement, Zhang Xuan took in a deep breath and flicked his wrist.

Hong long!

The blank formation plate was fixed onto the wall not too far away.

"I'm ready, let's begin!" Zhang Xuan clapped his hands.

"What is he doing?"

"I've no idea. Shouldn't he hold the formation plate in his hand to inscribe it better? What is he doing by affixing it onto the wall?"

"I don't know either..."

The crowd didn't expect Zhang Xuan to throw the formation plate straight at the wall. None of them had ever seen someone inscribing a formation plate like that!

Besides, the wall was three to four meters away from the seat. Could his carving knife even reach the formation plate?

Everyone stared at one another in confusion.

"What in the world... is this fellow thinking?"

Ruohuan gongzi and Fu Xiaochen stared at one another in bewilderment.

Only by holding the formation plate in one's hand could one control his strength better to carve thin lines of equal depth. To smash the formation plate into the wall... Could this be the other party's way of declaring his loss?

"Ready?" Elder Wu's mouth twitched. "You do know that for the sake of fairness, you can only stand there, right?"

The previous five had sat on the same position on the test. If this fellow were to walk to the wall, he would be cast under the doubt of cheating.

"I know!" Zhang Xuan smiled.

"Then... Since your carving knife cannot reach the wall, how do you intend to carve the formation plate?" Elder Wu asked.

Everyone carried the same doubt as well.

A carving knife's length was only half a chi (16.6cm) long whereas it was a distance of four meters to the wall... No matter how long one's arm could stretch, one couldn't possibly cover that distance!

If one's carving knife couldn't even reach the formation plate, how could one possibly inscribe anything on it?

Pavilion Master Kang, Elder Su, and Elder Ling stared at one another in doubt as well.

The trio knew that Zhang Shi was a man of great capability, so it was unlikely for him to be fooling around... But this sight still left them completely bewildered. They couldn't fathom what the other party was trying to do at all.

"Oh, I'm not going to use a carving knife. I'm using this instead!"

Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out a spear.

A grade-5 formation plate needed a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon to carve on it but a grade-3 formation plate had no such requirement.

A Phantom pinnacle weapon would be more than sufficient to leave a mark on it, and this spear happened to be of that level.

The spear was already more than three meters in length. Taking into account the length of Zhang Xuan's arm as well, he could easily cover the distance to the formation plate.

"Did he just say that... he is using a spear to carve the formation plate?"

"Am I seeing things?"

"The heck, is there something wrong with that fellow's head?! It is easy to err even with a carving knife, and yet, he wants to use a spear... Can that toy even be used to carve a formation plate?"

"I've no idea at all..."

...

Seeing the young man take out a spear, everyone nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

Using a spear to carve a formation plate? What the heck was going on?

Never in their lives had they stumble across such a ridiculous notion!

Ruohuan gongzi, Fu Xiaochen, and the others found their mouths twitching violently, and their eyes nearly popped to the floor.

Su shi and Ling shi trembled violently and their vision went dark.

They knew that this fellow wasn't one to follow conventions but this... Wasn't this too freaking unconventional?

Using a spear to inscribe?

Can you be even more exaggerated than that? I dare you to be even more ridiculous than that!

With a spear in his hands, Zhang Xuan looked like an undefeatable war god. Ignoring the doubtful gazes of the crowd, Zhang Xuan turned to Elder Wu and said, "Let's begin!"

"Since you insist on it... Alright then!"

Wiping away the sweat on his forehead, Elder Wu nodded in agreement.

Since the other party insisted on it, he had no other choice as well.

Tzing!

Plucking the string of the zither, the Demonic Tune of Psychosis sounded once more.

Zhang Xuan immediately felt a violent aura gushing at him, stimulating his soul, threatening to tear his head apart.

"It's exactly as I inferred!"

The bizarre energy kept striking at Zhang Xuan's consciousness, leaving him faint-headed. It was completely different to when he'd listened to it previously. Zhang Xuan couldn't help but shake his head.

When listening from outside, Zhang Xuan could only hear the music—he couldn't sense the violent aura at all. On the other hand, from his current location, he felt like a boat in the midst of a storm. No matter how he struggled, he seemed to be unable to avoid his ultimate fate of drowning in the whirlpool.

It was no wonder why Ruohuan gongzi, Feng Mosheng, and the others looked so worn out when they were challenging the test previously. Indeed, no occupation of the Nine Paths was ordinary.

"If we view the world with humility, there's much that is to be learned!"

Knowing that he might be forced mad if he were to withstand it forcefully, he immediately drove his Soul Depth of 14.1.

Weng!

Vanquishing Facade, Lucid Mind!

Upon reaching this state, one could find order amidst chaos. One's mind would become clearer, making it much easier to analyze matters.

Driving his Soul Depth, Zhang Xuan immediately felt the violent aura stimulating his soul previously dampening to the point that he could hardly feel it at all.

"This Elder Wu's Soul Depth is around the same level as me. Even though his Demonic Tune of Psychosis is impressive, it doesn't have much of a use on me!"

Looking around, he saw that the other party's melody had yet to stop. Clearly, it wasn't that the other party was going easy on him but that the other party's ability was no longer effective on him.

Zhang Xuan's Soul Depth was on par with a 4-star pinnacle master teacher. He didn't even lose out much in comparison to Pavilion Master Kang. No matter how formidable Elder Wu was, he could only be equal to him!

Besides, Zhang Xuan was a soul oracle on top of that. The resilience of his soul was far greater than that of ordinary cultivators. It was impossible for a Demonic Tune of Psychosis to subdue him.

"Time to start!"

Knowing that the melody was ineffective on him, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and the spear immediately exuded a radiant white glow and flew at the formation plate affixed on the wall.

Ding!

The collision between the spear and the formation plate created a crisp sound. It wasn't loud, but as though the chiming of a bell, it resounded in one's heart.

Affected by the sound, Elder Wu's zither couldn't help but fall into a temporary state of chaos. However, it didn't take long for him to recover, and the melody began flowing smoothly once more.

Ding!

However, the crisp sound echoed once more accurately during a moment of weakness of the melody. Under the influence of the sound, the smooth melody fell into chaos once more.

"Hmm?"

With a grim expression, Elder Wu's eyebrows shot up.

It might have been a coincidence the first time, but it was impossible for such coincidences to happen twice.

The two strikes of the spear occurred at the instant when the old tune had faded and a new tune was in the midst of being produced. Not only did it break the flow of the music, even Elder Wu's zhenqi, under the other party's disturbances, began to flow erratically.

A demonic tunist uses his own zhenqi to convert them into notes to attack another. Interrupting his melody means to interrupt his flow of zhenqi. If this goes on, not only would Elder Wu be unable to finish his melody, he might even be severely wounded due to the disturbance in his zhenqi.

Hu!

With a grim expression, Elder Wu stood up. With his both hands moving quickly about the zither, he drove his zhenqi to the maximum and the melody crescendoed.

Seemingly pressured by the other party's sudden movements, the clash between the spear and the formation plate also hastened.

Ding ding ding ding!

The crisp sound produced by the spear and the formation plate sounded like a dissonance, but nevertheless, it struck accurately during the weak points of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis.

"Something is wrong!"

Despite exerting his full strength, the other party was still able to strike accurately at his brief windows of weakness. This showed that the other party wasn't striking randomly but that he intended to pit it out with him!

"Humph! I don't believe that I can't even subdue a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle cultivator like you!"

Having been interrupted by the other party consecutively, Elder Wu felt a stifled sensation on his chest. Harrumphing forcefully, Elder Wu drove his zhenqi even harder, and it seemed as though steam was pouring out from his head. In that instant, his might reached a maximum.

Hong long!

Under the violent clash of energy, the table beneath the zither burst apart.

However, expecting such a situation, Elder Wu used his leg to hook the zither up and embraced it with his left hand while playing it with his right. The melody didn't stop in the midst of this hiccup at all.

Ding ding ding ding!

Similarly, the sounds of collision between the spear and the formation plate didn't stop either. On the contrary, it grew louder and louder, leaving one feeling immensely pressured.

If the melody Elder Wu's zither was relentless waves, then the crisp sound Zhang Xuan produced would be a huge tornado that blew away everything in its path! No matter how huge a wave was, it couldn't possibly fight against something a tornado!

"Damn it!"

With a pale face, Elder Wu's right hand swiftly moved around the zither, producing a consistent melody. Due to his zhenqi flowing too fast, a sound reminiscent to the rumbling of the thunder could be heard in the hall.

At the same time, he was swiftly moving about using a unique footwork technique.

Ancient Zither Eight Trigram Steps!

Through this unique footwork, he created a formation that complemented with the zither, thus causing the prowess of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis to increase by twofold in an instant.

Chapter 535

Elder Wu's Complete Breakdown (2)

"What's going on?"

"What is Elder Wu doing?"

The battle left all of the other master teachers flabbergasted.

What was going on?

Wasn't Elder Wu still perfectly fine a moment ago?

Why was smoke suddenly gushing out from his head at one moment, the table breaking the next, and now, he'd even started dancing about as though trying to use some formation...

Wasn't this a test on one's Soul Depth... Why did he end up leaping about as though this was some kind of dancing competition...

"Has Elder Wu... gone mad?" someone amidst the crowd shouted, causing the hall to fall completely silent.

From the looks of it... it did seem like he had lost his sanity...

"He's not mad, he's just executing the Ancient Zither Eight Trigram Steps! Just that... Why did Elder Wu suddenly execute this move?"

A 4-star master teacher amidst the crowd suddenly remarked with a frown.

The elder sitting next to him doubtfully asked, "You know this movement technique?"

"Of course I do! That's Elder Wu's strongest offensive technique. It creates a formation that perfectly complements the demonic tune..."

At which, the first elder suddenly paused and said, "Do you all still remember the

Calamity of the Seven Swords?"

The second elder nodded his head and replied, "Of course we do! It is the greatest calamity known to Myriad Kingdom City for the past century! Alliance Head Zhao sent innumerable experts out but to no avail. In the end, he could only request the assistance of the Master Teacher Pavilion. Back then, Elder Wu and you were dispatched for the mission!"

The Calamity of the Seven Swords was a serial killing incident that happened in the Myriad Kingdom City back then. Every time the killer struck, he would leave seven holes on the body of the deceased. No matter how powerful the other party was, even if he was a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan expert, without an exception, he would still be killed within seven blows.

After more than a dozen of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan experts were killed consecutively, a huge panic broke out within the alliance. Thus, Alliance Head Zhao led a group of experts to subdue the culprit personally, only to have the other party escape.

Left without a choice, he could only look to the Master Teacher Pavilion for assistance. Back then, Pavilion Master Kang hadn't taken up the mantle of power yet. The previous pavilion master dispatched Elder Wu and this elder to deal with the culprit. Thus, they gathered several dozens of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan experts to encircle him, and only then did they manage to kill the other party.

That matter caused a huge ruckus back then, and many of the older generation were unwilling to speak of it. Why would this elder suddenly raise the matter?

"The Seven Sword serial killer was extremely strong, he was at least on par with the current Pavilion Master Kang. It was Elder Wu who used the Ancient Zither Eight Trigram Steps to assault the other party's consciousness, allowing us to gain the upper hand and eventually achieve victory! Otherwise... given our strength, it would have been impossible for us to prevent him from escaping," the first elder said with a grim expression.

He could still remember the events that transpired that day. If not for Elder Wu utilizing the ability of a demonic tune to disturb the other party's consciousness at a crucial moment, not only would they have failed in their mission, they might have even all died under the other party's onslaught!

After all, the other party wasn't named as the greatest calamity of the Myriad Kingdom City for the past century for nothing. Just by thinking about the elusive seven swords caused cold sweat to drench his back.

"He used this movement technique against the Seven Swords serial killer? Then..."

The second elder's face paled. The Seven Swords serial killer was a being comparable to the pavilion master. Even such a person ended up succumbing to the Ancient Zither Eight Trigram Steps complemented with the Demonic Tune of Psychosis... How could that young man possibly withstand this?

If he couldn't withstand it, wouldn't he die on the spot?

"What's wrong with Elder Wu? Why is he using such a move on a junior?"

Upon understanding the graveness of the matter, the second elder's face turned crimson in fury.

No matter how unconventional and disrespectful that Zhang Xuan was, he was still a junior of theirs. As an elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion, a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, to attempt to kill your junior like that, aren't you going too far?

"I've no idea, but... Why does it seem like he is in a disadvantageous position despite having used this technique?" the first elder said with a bizarre look on his face.

"Disadvantageous position?"

The second elder was taken aback. He hurriedly turned his attention back to the stage, and with a look, his eyes suddenly narrowed.

At this moment, steam wasn't just puffing from Elder Wu's head anymore, it was puffing from his entire body, as though he had been thrown into a pot to be cooked.

Even though his footsteps didn't pause in the slightest, he was spurting blood with every step he made, as if someone was striking his chest with a giant hammer relentlessly.

The heck!

What was happening?

Despite launching a sonic attack that even the Seven Swords serial killer was unable to withstand, he was the one who was spewing blood non-stop... This sight was simply too bizarre!

"It's that Zhang shi..."

The first elder finally came to a realization, and he spoke with a slightly quivering voice.

"Ah?"

"That Zhang shi is using his spear to strike the formation plate. Even though it sounds erratic, every strike is aimed at the moment of weakness of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis, thus jolting Wu shi's zhenqi, resulting in his injury," the first elder said.

"There's such a thing as well?" The second elder widened his eyes in shock.

As a 4-star master teacher, he had broad knowledge spanning across innumerable subjects. Even so, he had never heard of such a thing before.

"I also find it bizarre but other than this, I can't think of any other reason!" the first elder said with a deep voice as he analyzed the situation. Even though he was the one saying so, he also found the matter completely inconceivable.

For a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle fellow, with just a spear and a formation plate, to jolt a 4-star demonic tunist to the point that he was spewing blood...

This... can't be real, right?

...

"Subduing music with music!"

Seeing the sight, Pavilion Master Kang suddenly thought of something and his face paled.

"Subduing music with music?" Su shi and Ling shi hurriedly turned to look at Pavilion Master Kang.

"Un. This is an ability that higher ranked demonic tunist uses against lower ranked

demonic tunist. By finding the flaw in the other party's melody and striking at that exact spot, one can send the other party's zhenqi into disarray, thus inducing severe injuries!" Pavilion Master Kang said slowly.

"Then... Pavilion master, I beseech you to save Zhang shi! He might very possibly be the one to represent our Master Teacher Pavilion for the Master Teacher Tournament so he mustn't get injured now..." Su shi pleaded anxiously.

"Save Zhang shi?" Pavilion Master Kang's face twitched. "The one who needs to be saved is Elder Wu! Furthermore, from the looks of it, it seems like he'll be reaching his limit soon!"

"Reaching his limit?"

Only then did Su shi and Ling shi realize that Elder Wu was spurting blood with each step he took.

"That... Pavilion master, it's just a test. There's no need for them to go to such an extent... I beseech you to stop the duel!" Ling shi said.

"Stop the duel? Subduing music with music is actually equivalent to pitting one's zhenqi against one's opponent's. It is impossible to stop it unless one side falls in defeat! If it could be stopped halfway through, Wu shi would have already done so... Do you think that he would go to the extent of executing the Ancient Zither Eight Trigram Steps, pushing on even when he is jolted to the point that he is on the brink of death?"

Pavilion Master Kang shook his head.

A demonic tune could be considered as an attack on one's soul, and that was an extremely profound and complicated subject. The worst case of scenario of forcefully interfering in a clash of zhenqi was physical injury. On the other hand, forcefully interfering in a clash of souls could cause permanent damage to one's head, thus turning one into an idiot!

This was precisely the reason why such a clash couldn't be stopped unless one falls in defeat!

"Isn't this a test of Soul Depth? Why did it suddenly turn into... a clash of tunes?"

Su shi and Ling shi's faces paled.

Wasn't this a test on one's Soul Depth? Why did it suddenly turn into such a fight?

Not to mention, it seemed as though neither side was willing to give in until one of them falls in defeat?

They knew that this fellow was a troublemaker, but never in their dreams did they expect that he could cause such a huge ruckus in a test of Soul Depth...

Su shi and Ling shi stared at one another in frenzy.

"I... don't know either!"

Pavilion Master Kang felt even more dismal.

For the number one expert of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance to be helpless before such a situation, he couldn't help but feel frustrated.

More importantly... He still had no idea how such a situation occurred!

He couldn't help but sigh deeply.

...

"What happened?"

"Can that be considered as inscribing on the formation plate?"

While the other master teachers were so astounded that they could faint from shock itself, Ruohuan gongzi, Fu Xiaochen, and the others widened their eyes at the sight before them. They felt as though their heart was threatening to leap out from their throats.

They had tasted the prowess of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis for themselves earlier, and they knew how powerful it was.

Even when Elder Wu was just sitting there calmly, they found themselves unable to withstand it already. Now that he was going to the extent of even executing the Ancient Zither Eight Trigrams Step, how could they possibly withstand this?

But why... was the young man before them completely fine?

A long moment later, Fu Xiaochen thought of a possibility and said, "That fellow must have learned some bizarre music technique that allowed him to curb Elder Wu's Demonic Tune of Psychosis via knocking on the formation plate!"

Other than this, he couldn't think of any other plausible explanation.

In his view, that Zhang Xuan fellow must have, by some incredible stroke of luck, learned a music technique that happened to curb Elder Wu's music, thus putting Elder Wu in a disadvantageous situation.

Ruohuan gongzi harrumphed.

"So what if he can curb Elder Wu's Demonic Tune of Psychosis? This test is on one's Soul Depth. What is important is the number and exquisiteness of the strokes! It's futile no matter how well he strikes the formation plate with his spear!"

The others also realized this and nodded their heads.

Indeed, this test was on their Soul Depth, not their battle prowess. Even if one were to leave Elder Wu spurting blood with any step, if one couldn't leave behind sufficient strokes on the formation plate, it would be meaningless!

"Don't worry, I've been paying attention and all he has been doing is to stab his spear onto the formation plate randomly... In the end, for the sake of showing off, he forgot his primary goal. That makes him nothing more than a clown!"

Waving his hands grandly, Ruohuan gongzi continued saying.

So what if you are capable of curbing the Demonic Tune of Psychosis?

If a question asks you what one plus one is, and you answer with a complex mathematical theory, no matter how advanced your theory is, you still aren't answering the question. It's an erroneous response!

"The Demonic Tune of Psychosis is about to end!"

Suddenly, a voice amidst the crowd sounded. Everyone turned their gazes over.

At this moment, Elder Wu was puking blood as he advanced forward. He was already no less than three meters away from Zhang Xuan, and the sound of the collision between the two grew louder and louder. By this point, both sounds were already intricately mixed together, making it impossible to differentiate the Demonic Tune of Psychosis from the knocking sounds.

But judging from the flow of time, the three minutes duration for the test was about to be up.

"Let's hope that... Elder Wu will be fine!"

Looking at the massive pool of blood on the floor and the ghastly pale face of Elder Wu, everyone prayed solemnly.

...

Just as everyone had guessed, the test was indeed coming to an end soon.

The Demonic Tune of Psychosis had already reached its conclusion.

"Alright!"

Noticing that, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He had been busy clashing with the demonic tune via striking at the moments of its flaws, and as such, he hadn't noticed the peculiarity in his surroundings yet.

Flicking his wrist, he was just about to finish the last note when he turned his head to the side and saw a completely pale face beside him.

"AHH!"

Shocked, Zhang Xuan's instinctively whipped his spear at the other party.

Chapter 536

First... From the Bottom? [3in1]

This was his first time fighting against a demonic tunist. Even though the other party's Soul Depth was beneath his, it was equaled out by his low cultivation. Thus, he had no choice but to retaliate with all of his might. As such, he didn't have any spare energy to pay attention to his surroundings.

As such, Zhang Xuan couldn't have expected that the ghastly pale face belonged to Elder Wu. He thought that someone was trying to assault him.

Thus, executing the Heaven's Path Spear Art with all his might, the spear in his hands turned into a bright ray of light and flew toward the other party.

On the opposite side, Elder Wu had just heaved a sigh of relief, and before he could react, he saw a spear whipping straight toward him. His eyes narrowed but it was already too late to dodge. As such, he was struck in the chest and was sent flying out.

Padah!

He was smacked into the wall, forming a "大" character on it.

"What the heck?!"

No one could have expected that there would be such a twist at the end of the test. Their eyes popped out from their sockets, and their faces grew so scarlet that it seemed as though blood would seep out of it if one were to pinch it.

That was Elder Wu, the only demonic tunist in the whole of Myriad Kingdom City, a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert who was widely feared by others. Yet, he was struck by a spear and crashed into a wall...

Did it need to be so exaggerated?

"Elder Wu, why did you... suddenly run up to me? I didn't do this on purpose..."

Hearing the shocked gasps from the crowd, Zhang Xuan finally recognized the other party. With a reddened face, he spoke sheepishly.

Wasn't this a test of Soul Depth? Why did you suddenly run up to me then? I thought that you were up to no good...

"Cough cough!"

Coughing up two large mouthfuls of blood, Elder Wu finally recovered from his condition and struggled down from the wall.

What the heck was this?

The pavilion master told him that he just had to serve as the examiner for this test. He thought that it would be easy, so he immediately agreed to it. Who knew that this would almost cause his death?

The other party's strikes on the formation plate were aimed at the weaknesses of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis. If he didn't retaliate, his soul would surely be severely damaged. Left with no other option, he could only slowly advance to heighten the might of his offense...

In the end, the demonic tune that even the pavilion master feared seem to be completely ineffective on the other party... The other party didn't even seem to notice the increasing intensity of the tune!

The freaking hell!

To be able to be impervious to a demonic tune... What kind of monster did Su Fan and Ling Yuheng bring here?

The great frustration he was suffering from was making him doubt the purpose of life in itself.

"Forget it, I don't blame you..."

Even so, he knew that a clash between music could easily spiral out of control. The other party didn't intend this either. Thus, after recuperating for a short moment, Elder Wu waved his hands nonchalantly.

Even though he felt indignant, as an elder, he couldn't possibly pick a bone with a 2-star master teacher!

Besides... Given how he was reduced to such a state even when he wasn't picking a bone, if he were to really try to exact vengeance... It would be hard to tell whether he could return alive!

Since that was the case... He might as well drop the matter.

"Check the formation plate!"

Fetching the formation plate from the wall, he passed it over to the invigilating master teacher.

"Yes!"

Grabbing the formation plate, he began counting the strokes on it and announced, "A total of 431 strokes. Every single stroke is of equal depth and width!"

"431 strokes? Isn't that result the same as Ruohuan gongzi?"

"That seems to be so... He managed to leave behind so many marks with a spear?"

"I thought that he was just randomly knocking the spear on the formation plate, to think that he managed to inscribe so many strokes. That's impressive!"

"Since the both of them have the same number of strokes... who will be the second place? Or will it be shared between the two of them?"

...

Hearing the results, the crowd flew into an uproar.

They'd thought that given how Zhang Xuan seemed to be randomly striking on the formation plate without any clear order, the strokes on the formation plate would surely be chaotic and messy, or perhaps, he might not have even left a single stroke behind at all. Yet, never could they have expected that the latter would share the same result as Ruohuan gongzi!"

Since the both of them had the same result... How would the ranking be decided?

Were they going to be placed second together?

"He also... carved 431 strokes?" Not expecting Zhang Xuan to achieve such results, Ruohuan gongzi's complexion darkened.

With a carving knife in hand, he toiled through so much hardship before he could inscribe so many strokes. On the other hand, the other party was equipped with a spear and his movements were completely erratic, not to mention, he was knocking on the plate to retaliate against Elder Wu. Yet, the other party still achieved a result equivalent to his? Was this for real?

"Looks like we've been underestimating him. That fellow isn't as simple as he looks!"

Ruohuan gongzi's eyebrows shot up.

When he heard that the other party was only a 2-star master teacher, honestly speaking, he didn't even view the other party as an opponent. But from the looks of it now, it was the gravest mistake he could make.

To use a spear to inscribe on a formation plate from several meters away... He could never have imagined this to be possible.

In fact, even with seeing it with his own eyes, he still found it incredulous.

"However... Do you think that achieving a draw with me will be that easy?" Ruohuan gongzi's lips curled up to form a cold sneer.

So what if the other party managed to inscribe the same number of strokes as him? He still had a trump card in hand! A countryside bumpkin like the other party could never hope to match up to him!

"Impressive!"

Feng Mosheng was also awed.

Despite using a carving knife, he only carved one more stroke than the other party. As expected of someone heavily recommended by the elders. Fearsome indeed!

He thought that he was the dark horse for this selection round, but compared to the other party, he felt like he could only be considered as a dark donkey.

...

Amidst the crowd's discussion, six formation plates were placed side by side on a table. Each of them was filled with inscriptions, reflecting their prior work and accomplishment.

"Pavilion master, please evaluate the formation plates!"

The invigilating master teacher clasped his fist and bowed to Pavilion Master Kang.

"Un!" Nodding his head, Pavilion Master Kang, Elder Su, and a few other elders stepped forward and browsed through the formation plates.

"The calculation before is accurate. Allow me to announce the results for the first round then."

Scanning through the crowd, Pavilion Master Kang said, "Feng Mosheng, with 432 strokes, is in first place. Jun Ruohuan and Zhang Xuan, with 431 strokes each, are tied in second place. Fu Xiaochen, with 427 strokes, is in fourth place. Luo Xi, with 411 strokes, is in fifth place. Du Hu, with 407 strokes, is in sixth place!"

"I didn't expect Feng shi to really be in first place!"

"That Zhang shi is formidable as well. Probably no one thought that he could achieve a tie with Ruohuan gongzi!"

"Indeed. I thought that his reputation supersedes his capability, but to think that it would be the opposite instead!"

...

Innumerable discussions broke out below.

Everyone thought that Ruohuan gongzi and Fu Xiaochen would be standing at the top of the candidates. No one expected that two dark horses - Feng Mosheng and Zhang Xuan - would appear all of the sudden.

"Alright, the first round is over. Let's proceed on to the second round..."

After declaring the results, Pavilion Master Kang was just about to proceed into the

next round when a voice interrupted him.

"Pavilion master, I think that there's a problem with my result!"

Everyone turned to the stage, only to see Ruohuan gongzi stepped forward with a faint smile on his face.

"Oh?" Pavilion Master Kang turned to look at him.

"For the first round, Elder Wu said that we'll be judged on the progress in our inscription and the exquisiteness of our strokes!" Ruohuan gongzi said. "May I double check if that's true?"

"I did say those words!" Elder Wu nodded his head.

After resting for a moment, he had already recovered significantly. Just that, his face was still pale, and his spirit seemed to be a little withered.

"That's exactly what I mean. You all have checked the number of strokes... but you all forgot to check the exquisiteness of it!" Ruohuan gongzi chuckled lightly.

"Exquisiteness of the strokes?"

Everyone was taken aback. Even Pavilion Master Kang couldn't help but frown.

How in the world do we check that?

Are we supposed to judge by how thin the candidates' strokes are? But that's a problem of the carving knife already, one's Soul Depth had nothing to do with it!

"Simple, I've carved more than just marks on the formation plate... Please take a look!"

Walking up to the formation plate, Ruohuan gongzi whipped out his carving knife and added several dozen more strokes.

These strokes were very simple-they were mainly just connecting some of the isolated lines together. However, just by connecting these lines together, the messy strokes on the formation plate changed into something very different.

Weng!

A crisp chirp sounded, and a giant peony suddenly appeared before everyone's eyes. Shrouded in spiritual energy, it slowly bloomed beautifully.

"It is... a painting!"

"Under that kind of condition, Ruohuan gongzi actually managed to carve a fifth level painting on the formation plate!"

"That explains why he's so confident despite the number of his strokes being lower than that of Feng shi!"

"A fifth level painting... That's a work that only a 3-star painter could produce! I've long heard that one of Ruohuan gongzi's supporting occupation is a painter... From the looks of it, that's indeed the case!"

"Incredible..."

...

Everyone was astonished. Even Pavilion Master Kang didn't expect this turn of events.

To be able to grant the flower spirit and create a fifth level painting when one's mind was under the assault of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis... Ruohuan gongzi's mental fortitude had reached an astonishing level!

It was no wonder why he was so confident!

Carving strokes on the formation plate was extremely elementary. Creating a painting under that condition... that was true capability.

Under normal circumstances, it would already be difficult to create a fifth level painting in three minutes. Not to mention, the other party had done it under the influence of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis... His talent, capability, and mental fortitude were truly frightening.

"Good, good!"

Pavilion Master Kang's eyes lit up as he nodded his head in satisfaction.

As painter wasn't one of his supporting occupations, he failed to see through the trick

hidden in the formation plate. Even so, he understood the difficulty in creating a fifth level painting under that condition.

Ruohuan gongzi was his direct disciple. Seeing the other party's outstanding performance had filled him with pride and relief.

"The reason why I have less strokes isn't because I was unable to inscribe anymore but that... to carve out a painting, I couldn't leave behind any more strokes than that. I hope that pavilion master can reconsider the judgement!"

Ruohuan gongzi spoke confidently.

"Un!" Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head. His gaze swept across the elders. "What do you all think?"

"Even though he has carved a single stroke less... he has managed to create a painting. Clearly, Ruohuan gongzi's accomplishment is much greater here!"

"To be able to create a fifth level painting under the influence of the Demonic Tune of Psychosis, his mental fortitude is indeed impressive!"

"I also feel that Ruohuan gongzi should be in first place!"

...

Soon, most elders concurred that Jun Ruohuan should be in the first place.

No one questioned the decision, and even Feng Mosheng expressed his approval of the decision.

Even though he had carved more strokes, it was clear that the other party's work was much more exquisite than his. Every single stroke the other party made had a purpose, whereas in comparison, his strokes were made randomly just for the purpose of clearing the test.

Seeing that no one had any objections, Pavilion Master Kang announced, "Good. Since no one has any objection, I'll announce the revised results. Ruohuan is in first place, Feng Mosheng in second, Zhang shi third, Fu Xiaochen fourth, Luo Xi fifth, and Du Hu sixth!"

"Ruohuan gongzi is indeed impressive. As expected of the most popular contender for the champion spot!"

"He managed to get the first place in the first round easily. However, we'll have to wait to see whether he can maintain his lead!"

...

Everyone nodded their heads in agreement.

Seeing that he had received the first place, Ruohuan gongzi chuckled delightfully. Turning to Zhang Xuan, his eyebrow shot up and he said, "Zhang shi, it seems like we aren't tied in the second place anymore!"

You sure caused a huge ruckus just now, but so what? In the end, you still lost to me!

"Ah..."

Not expecting the other party to gloat even after getting the first place, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly. He turned his gaze to Pavilion Master Kang and said, "That... as long as one's strokes are more exquisite, one's results will be better, right?"

"Yes!" Pavilion Master Kang was taken aback for a moment, but he soon nodded his head.

"That is good!"

Following which, Zhang Xuan turned to his formation plate on the table, and with a darkened expression, he bellowed, "What are you sleeping around for? Hurry up and get to work!"

Weng!

A crisp sound of Spirit Euphoria sounded in the air, and the formation plate which he had just inscribed whirled into action. Spiritual energy was frenziedly drawn from the surroundings, creating a massive vortex.

"Spirit euphoria... This is a... sentient grade-4 Spirit Gathering Formation Plate?"

Elder Wu narrowed his eyes.

As a 4-star formation master, he possessed a deep understanding of formations. As such, he knew how difficult it was to carve a formation plate.

Even with his current strength, carving a grade-4 Spirit Gathering Formation would require at least a week.

Yet, the other party, just by stabbing for three minutes with a spear, managed to inscribe one successfully... And what made it even shocking was that it was a Sentient Formation Plate!

Th-this... was way too shocking!

On top of that, it is common understanding that a grade-3 blank formation plate could only harness a grade-3 formation. Yet, the other party managed to inscribe a grade-4 formation... How deep could his comprehension of formation have reached?

At the very least, Elder Wu knew that he was no match for the other party.

What was even more fearsome was that... the other party did it while facing off with him.

While blood was spurting out of his mouth, the other party was busy making a grade-4 Sentient Formation Plate...

Elder Wu felt so stifled that he could explode at any moment now.

"The inscribing of a formation plate is an extremely complex process. Every single stroke had to be carefully planned, and not a single mistake would be tolerated. To do so with a spear..."

"In comparison, Ruohuan gongzi's fifth level painting is nothing at all!"

"Indeed, there's a huge disparity between the two..."

...

Seeing the gathering of spiritual energy, everyone in the room fell silent. Their eyes widened as though they had seen a ghost.

"You..."

On the other hand, Ruohuan gongzi trembled so violently that he was about to go insane.

He thought that he was already formidable to have created a painting. Yet, never in his dreams did he expect this fellow to inscribe a grade-4 formation!

A grade-4 formation was already extremely difficult to inscribe even without the Demonic Tune of Psychosis. Yet, this young fellow did it while leaving Elder Wu spurting blood...

That was too unbelievable!

More importantly... the formation plate was even sentient!

Even though both his painting and the formation possessed spirit, the difference in the significance of the feats was like heaven and earth.

Ruohuan gongzi thought that he would surely be ranked first this time. He didn't expect to be overthrown in the blink of an eye, and even stomped several times upon...

Tears threatened to stream down his face.

If only he knew earlier, he wouldn't have acted so smugly and say that he couldn't be tied with the other party in the second place. In the end... he was the one who ended up being in the second place instead...

This face slap...!

Just as he was feeling stifled, the other party's voice sounded, "Can my formation be considered as exquisite?"

"Cough cough, it does!"

Pavilion Master Kang's face reddened.

It was embarrassing how the other party had inscribed a formation and he didn't even notice it.

More importantly... To have to change his judgement twice in a single round, what kind of monsters were involved in this selection round?

"In the first test, Zhang Shi, being in first place, shall be awarded 6 points. Ruohuan, in second place, will be awarded 5 points, so on and so forth..."

Knowing that it would only become more embarrassing if he were to delay any longer, he hurriedly announced the results. Seeing that there was no one objecting to them, he heaved a sigh of relief and continued, "Alright, let's go on to the second test- the test of cultivation!"

"In order to become a master teacher, one's cultivation realm is of utmost importance. While a master teacher's strength is mostly derived by their ability to discern and exploit the flaws of their enemies, their own cultivation mustn't be neglected.

"But of course, one's cultivation is closely related to the resources they have access to and the guidance of their teachers. As all of you come from different backgrounds, it's natural that you all will have different cultivation realm. As such, a normal battle will be unfair!"

Everyone nodded their heads.

Taking Ruohuan gongzi for example, he came from the Jun Clan, the dominant clan of the Four Great Clans. On top of that, his teacher was Pavilion Master Kang. From the very start, he was already entitled to the best conditions possible. Not to mention, he was also older than most of the participants present, so it was only natural for him to be stronger than the others.

On the other hand, people like Luo Xi and Du Hu came from backward kingdoms so the resources they had for cultivation couldn't compare up to the rest. On top of that, they were also younger than the other candidates. It would be unfair to gauge them by having them battle one another.

"Thus, I've discussed with the other elders and we decided to have Elder Bai fight you with his cultivation suppressed to your respective levels. The more blows you can withstand in the fight against him, the stronger you will be deemed to be. Not only will this assess your comprehension of your current cultivation realm, it will also test your reflexes and decision-making skills in times of danger. This makes the test even more comprehensive," Pavilion Master Kang said.

"Fight with Elder Bai, who has suppressed his cultivation?"

"Those who have joined the selection round are of differing cultivation levels. The test

would be biased if we have them fight against one another. Fu shi has already reached Transcendent Mortal 3-dan pinnacle whereas Zhang shi is only at Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle. Even without having the two face one another, the result of the battle is clear."

"Indeed. Having Elder Bai suppress his cultivation, and gauging the respective candidates by the number of blows they can last against the latter will indeed make the test fairer..."

"As a 4-star master teacher, Elder Bai's comprehension of battle techniques is far superior to them. Even if he were to suppress his cultivation to be of equal level to them, it would be impossible for them to emerge victorious. By gauging the results based on the number of blows the candidates can withstand from Elder Bai, the candidates can avoid getting injured while accurately discerning their level of strength among their peers. That's a good idea!"

"Un! Other than Pavilion Master Kang, nearly no one is able to defeat Elder Bai. On top of that, he's impartial. I have no qualms with the rules!"

Hearing the rules of the second round, everyone nodded their heads in agreement.

The six participating master teachers of the selection round had differing cultivation levels, and thus, it would be impossible to have them spar with one another without compromising on fairness. Thus, having an elder suppress his cultivation to face off with them would become the ideal way to test the candidates.

The suppression of cultivation would make the test more impartial as the duo would be of equal cultivation. On the other hand, the number of blows that the candidate could withstand was the best way to gauge the candidate's strength.

This could be considered as the most impartial method possible already.

Seeing the crowd agree to it, Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head in agreement. Turning to the elder seated not too far away, he said, "I'll be troubling you then!"

"Don't worry about it!" The elder stood up and walked up the stage.

Elder Bai, Bai Heng!

"Don't worry. After suppressing my cultivation, I'll fight with all my might. I won't go

easy on anyone, so you need not worry about the fairness of the test. How many blows you can withstand will depend on your capability, and I, Bai Heng, swear on my dignity as a master teacher that I won't side with anyone!"

Walking up, Elder Bai looked at the candidates seriously.

Ruohuan gongzi and Fu Xiaochen hurriedly said, "We have trust in Elder Bai's impartiality!"

Elder Bai was a reputable elder in the Master Teacher Pavilion. Possessing a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle, his true fighting prowess was second only to Pavilion Master Kang. On top of that, he had an upright personality, and he had even used his dignity as a master teacher to guarantee his impartiality on this matter. Since that was the case, it was impossible for him to go easy on anyone.

"Since there are no objections, you all should make preparations that you all deem fit. You're permitted to use weapons, or if you prefer, bare fists are fine too. In any case, use the battle techniques you are the most adept in to fight with Elder Bai. However... for the sake of fairness and secrecy, the fight will be conducted in a sealed chamber. The number of blows will be reflected by a unique formation on the wall, so it'll be impossible to falsify the results. Also, the details of the fight will be kept a secret as well, so you need not worry!" Pavilion Master Kang said.

After hearing the arrangements, the other master teachers nodded their heads.

Every master teacher had their own ultimate technique that they didn't want anyone to know of. If they were to display it before a crowd, there was high possibility that the information might leak out. If so, their trump card would be known by their enemies and thus be rendered useless.

Conducting the test in a sealed chamber could solve this issue.

"I'll go in and wait for you all!"

Waving his hands casually, Elder Bai walked into a small room by the side of the hall.

"Alright, who wants to go first?"

Seeing that Elder Bai was ready, Pavilion Master Kang turned to look at the six candidates before him.

"I'll go first!"

Fu Xiaochen stepped forward.

He was a potential contender for the champion seat, but in the first round, he was only in the fourth place. This made him extremely frustrated.

In terms of Soul Depth, he might not be able to compare up to Feng Mosheng and Ruohuan gongzi, but in terms of strength, he was confident that he was second to none!

"Un, be careful!" Pavilion Master Kang nodded in satisfaction.

"Pavilion master, thank you for your advice!"

Fu Xiaochen walked into the room.

Weng!

The moment he stepped into the room, the white wall beside the door immediately glowed and a number appeared.

1!

2!

3!

...

10!

The number changed continuously, and it didn't take long for it to reach '10'.

"It has begun!"

"Even though Elder Bai has suppressed his cultivation, to be able to survive ten blows from him, Fu shi is quite incredible!"

"Need that be said? Fu shi is Elder Hai's student! He has already reached an incredible

mastery in the Thousand Seas Punch. Even with Elder Bai's astounding fighting prowess, it'll take him at least fifteen blows to defeat Fu shi!"

"Indeed. The Thousand Seas Punch launches blows relentlessly at one's enemies as though the ceaseless waves of the sea, it is truly a formidable battle technique..."

"I wonder how many blows he can withstand."

...

Seeing the numbers on the wall, everyone could tell that the fight had already begun, and both sides had already traded ten blows. They couldn't help but clench their fists out of anxiety.

Elder Bai's fighting prowess was formidable. Even if he had suppressed his cultivation, surviving ten blows from him was already something one could brag about!

After all, even if an expert suppressed his cultivation to the same level as a rookie, his comprehension of fighting in itself was not something that a rookie could compare up to. How could the rookie possibly achieve victory under such circumstances?

Hu!

Amidst the shock gazes of the crowd, the leaping numbers finally came to a halt.

31!

Following which, the tightly shut doors opened and Fu Xiaochen walked out. Even though his clothes were slightly unkempt, his eyes glowed in excitement.

Only when experiencing it oneself would one understand how powerful Elder Bai was. Even though the latter had already suppressed his cultivation, Fu shi still wasn't a match at all.

If not for him dumping out all of his trump cards, it would have been difficult for him to even last twenty blows.

With 31 blows, Fu Xiaochen was confident that he could at least get the first two places.

"Impressive!"

Ruohuan gongzi looked at the young man who had just left the chamber and his expression turned grim.

He wasn't confident that he could survive so many blows from Elder Bai, and this put heavy pressure on him.

"Ruohuan gongzi, let me see how well you fare!"

Fu Xiaochen walked up to Ruohuan gongzi and said with curled up lips.

"Sure!"

Taking in a deep breath, Jun Ruohuan gritted his teeth and walked into the chamber.

Huhuhuhu!

Soon, numbers started to appear on the white wall.

"How many blows do you think Ruohuan gongzi can withstand?"

"I can't really tell. His fighting prowess is at the same level as Fu shi. Since the latter is able to survive 31 blows, his result should be around that level as well!"

"Let's just hope so!"

Seeing the number increasing continuously, everyone's face slowly grew graver.

Jun Ruohuan and Fu Xiaochen, as idols for many of the younger generation, were the two most popular contenders for the champion seat. Everyone was curious to know whose fighting prowess was greater.

"I think Fu Xiaochen should fare better than Jun Ruohuan!" Pavilion Master Kang suddenly said.

"Oh?" Elder Su turned his attention over.

"Xiaochen has a calm disposition which makes him adept in defense. On the other hand, Ruohuan, due to his prideful nature, only becomes more and more aggressive in

the face of danger. Such attacks might work on others but against Elder Bai... it will prove to be a fatal flaw instead!" Pavilion Master Kang analyzed.

"You're right!" Su shi and Ling shi nodded their heads in agreement.

It wasn't by chance that Jun Ruohuan was known as the head of the Four Gentlemen. It was through his fists that he slowly beat that reputation out for himself.

And it was precisely because of his strength that built onto his pride.

Prideful people tended to be weaker in their defense. Usually, this wouldn't make much of a difference when facing off with those of similar cultivation realm, but against the experienced Elder Bai, Jun Ruohuan's flaws would be exploited and amplified many folds.

Hu!

While the duo was speaking, the light on the wall slowly faded, revealing two digits to the crowd

30!

Just as Pavilion Master Kang guessed, Ruohuan gongzi's result was indeed beneath that of Fu Xiaochen. At thirty blows, he happened to lose to the latter by just a single blow.

"Just a single blow?"

"Do you think that Ruohuan gongzi might have some trump card just like in the first round? Even though he has lost out to Fu shi by a single blow, is it possible that he has won instead?"

"How is that possible! This is a real spar; every blow has to be created by one's own strength. A blow less means a blow less, there's no making up for it!"

"That's true!"

...

Seeing that it was thirty blows, there were some who felt that Ruohuan gongzi might

be able to make a turnaround like he did previously. But giving it some thought, it was indeed impossible to do so.

After all, sparring was different from carving a formation plate. Every blow counted, there was no making up for it with anything.

Jiya!

During the discussions, the door to the chamber opened and Ruohuan gongzi walked out with a bitter smile.

He also didn't expect to lose to Fu Xiaochen by a single blow.

Even so, there was nothing he could do. Even though Elder Bai had suppressed his cultivation, his offense was relentless as though the ceaseless waves. He had given it his all, but thirty blows were already his limit.

Even though he lost, he had no regrets.

"Allow me to go next!"

Upon seeing Ruohuan gongzi exit, Feng Mosheng took in a deep breath and walked into the chamber.

A bright light shone, and numbers appeared on the white wall. Not too long later, Feng Mosheng walked out with a pale face. The number was fixed at 28.

Seeing his result, Fu Xiaochen and Ruohuan gongzi heaved a long sigh of relief. Then, their gazes turned to Zhang Xuan.

After the three of them were done with the examination, the only one most likely to turn the situation around was this fellow.

Even though they didn't know how the other party's fighting prowess was, given how he was able to leave Elder Wu in a wretched state through music itself, he was unlikely to be weak.

But what that left them disappointed was that Zhang Xuan didn't seem to be in a rush to enter the chamber at all. Luo Xi and Du Hu went ahead of him, and what was surprising was that Du Hu, who had fared the worst in the previous round, actually

managed to withstand twenty-eight blows as well, thus achieving a result equaling Feng Mosheng.

On the other hand, Luo Xi, due to her physical weakness as a female, only managed to withstand twenty-four blows.

"It's Zhang shi's turn..."

"Indeed. I wonder if he can become the dark horse just like how he did in the first round!"

"I find that very unlikely. After all, as a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle, his battle experience is likely to be very lacking. He'll be at a huge disadvantage facing off with Elder Bai!"

"That's true..."

...

Seeing Zhang Xuan walk into the chamber, the crowd whispered amongst themselves.

In truth, the method of conducting the test wasn't as fair as it sounded. It was much easier for a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan expert to subdue a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan cultivator as compared to a Transcendent Mortal 3-dan cultivator even if he were to suppress his cultivation to their respective level. This was due to the difference in their battle experience.

Take for example, while a professor might be able to do a university student's homework and a grade schooler's homework, it was clear that a grade schooler's homework would be much easier for him than a university student's homework.

Zhang shi's cultivation was the lowest among all the candidates. It would surely be much easier for Elder Bai to deal with him than the other candidates.

"How many blows do you think he can withstand?"

Pavilion Master Kang turned to look at Su shi.

Su shi hesitated for a moment before saying, "This... I'm not too sure. However, given Elder Bai's skills, even if he were to suppress his cultivation to Transcendent Mortal

1-dan pinnacle, he would still be able to kill a Transcendent Mortal 2-dan intermediate stage cultivator easily. I'm afraid Zhang shi probably won't be able to last for too long!"

He carried deep trust in Zhang Xuan, but Elder Bai wasn't someone ordinary either.

His grasp of cultivation and battle techniques had reached an incredibly profound level. Even Su shi would find it hard to match up to the other party, let alone Zhang shi!

"Indeed. Even though Zhang shi had managed to progress three cultivation realms in the past twenty days, his cultivation should still be unstable and his grasp over his strength should be lacking. My guess is that he'll lose within ten blows!" Pavilion Master Kang analyzed.

Su shi had said previously that Zhang shi had progressed from Zongshi realm twenty days ago to Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle. Achieving breakthroughs so quickly, even if he was a Celestial Master Teacher, it was inevitable for his cultivation to be slightly shaky.

His estimate of ten blows was already a positive one.

"I also think so, but... Zhang shi has never been a person who could be dictated by common logic. It's hard to tell what will happen next..." Ling shi interjected.

While he agreed with Pavilion Master Kang's analysis-under normal circumstances, it would be impossible for Zhang shi to withstand even ten blows... he also knew that Zhang shi was a person who often broke expectations. As long as the result wasn't out, it would be hard to fathom a guess.

"Look, it's starting!"

They weren't the only ones who were anxious. Everyone in the hall was looking intently at the white wall beside the door, and soon, a number appeared on it... 1!

"Ah? Why isn't it increasing anymore?"

After seeing the number '1', everyone thought that it would continue increasing to a point before stopping altogether. But to their astonishment, the number seemed to be printed firmly there, not moving at all.

"Could it be that... the formation is malfunctioning?"

"That's impossible! The formation was set up by Elder Wu personally. Besides, it was fine when the other candidates were using it. How could it possibly spoil all of a sudden?"

"Then... why is that number not moving at all?"

"Could it be that..."

At that moment, everyone thought of the same possibility and disbelief filled their faces.

"He lost... in a single move?"

Ruohuan gongzi's eyes lit up, and he clenched his fists tightly together in agitation.

Even the austere Fu Xiaochen showed a rare expression of delight.

The duo had been worried that this black horse would overthrow their records just like he did previously. No one expected him to lose in a single blow.

But that was to be expected. How could a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan lad possibly be able to withstand Elder Bai's ferocious assault?

They had thought that this fellow might be their greatest obstacle to winning the selection round, but from the looks of it now, they were just overthinking things-the other party wasn't even a threat at all!

"Isn't this result too poor... With such strength, he still hopes to participate in the Master Teacher Tournament?"

"Even though strength isn't the determining criteria, it is still of significant importance. Even Beauty Luo Xi is able to withstand twenty-four blows. To lose in a single blow... Isn't that way too fast?!"

"Indeed. So what if he has a powerful Soul Depth? Without sufficient strength, he would still be eliminated swiftly in the tournament!"

Upon understanding the situation, everyone began gossiping.

In the first round, this fellow had astonished everyone with his unparalleled talents. Even Elder Wu nearly lost his sanity because of him. So, they thought that even if his result in the second round couldn't compare up to his first, he would still be able to fare decently. They never thought that... the other party would do so poorly!

Losing in a single blow!

Even a normal cultivator should have been able to withstand at least several blows!

"This..." Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and Ling shi stared at one another blankly.

They had deduced that Zhang shi wouldn't be able to even withstand ten blows, but... to lose in a single blow, what the heck was this?

"Zhang shi sure likes to do the unexpected. I sure didn't expect this conclusion..."

Su shi flashed a bitter smile as he spoke.

This Zhang Xuan was always doing things that surpassed the imaginations of others. Just taking this as example, they had thought of all kinds of possibility, but one thing they didn't expect to see was for the latter to lose in a single blow.

"Alright, since the results are out, allow me to announce them!"

Shaking his head, Pavilion Master Kang scanned the surroundings and said, "Fu Xiaochen, with a record of 31 blows, is in the first place. Ruohuan gongzi, withstanding a total of 30 blows, is in the second place. Feng Mosheng and Du Hu, with a total of 28 blows, are tied at third. Luo Xi, with a total of twenty-four blows, is in the fifth place. Last but not least, Zhang shi... withstanding just a total of one blow, is in the..."

In the midst of announcing the results for the second round, 'jiya!', the door suddenly opened.

Turning his gaze over, Pavilion Master Kang suddenly saw something that left his eyes widened in shock, and he couldn't help but exclaim, "What the hell?!"

Chapter 537

Continuity of Spiritual Wisdom

Going back to two minutes ago...

Upon entering the room, Zhang Xuan scanned his surroundings.

The room wasn't exceptionally big. Upon entering, Zhang Xuan immediately saw a weapon rack. There were swords, sabers, spears, and many different kinds of weapons that a person could imagine of on it.

Elder Bai stood at the very center of the room with an impassive expression. "Take the weapon that you're the most adept at!"

"Weapon?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "It'll be hard not to hurt another using a weapon so there's no need for it!"

The three weapons that he specialized in-sword, spear, and saber-had all reached the level of Weapon Intent. He didn't think that there was any need to go to such an extent just for a mere test.

"You..."

Elder Bai's face darkened.

It's indeed easy to hurt another using weapon, but do you think that you can hurt me?

His eyebrows shot up coldly.

The other party was an arrogant brat.

"Alright. Since you chose this of your own accord, don't blame me for not going easy on you!"

Not bothered about arguing with the other party, Elder Bai suppressed his cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle to just 1-dan pinnacle.

"I've suppressed my cultivation to your level already. Make your move!"

Elder Bai stretched his arm and beckoned with a cold gaze.

As a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan, he found it humiliating to face a weaker, bare-handed cultivator with a weapon. Thus, he chose to fight with his bare hands as well.

"You should go first..."

Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

"You..." Elder Bai felt so infuriated that his eyelids started leaping.

Is this fellow so confident or is he simply being narcissistic? Given my strength, if I were to make a move first, you won't even get a chance to retaliate! I'm giving you a chance, you know?

One must know that the previous competitors had come at him with their strongest moves as soon as the battle started. It was only through their relentless barrage of attacks that they barely managed to survive twenty blows from him...

Are you sure you can withstand it if you allow me to go first?

"Alright then!"

Seeing that the other party had no intention of making a move, Elder Bai's eyebrows shot up. Stepping against the ground, he dashed forward.

Huala!

Afterimages appeared in his place, and in the blink of an eye, he appeared before the young man.

"Fall!"

Seeing that the other party didn't even try to dodge his offense, Elder Bai harrumphed coldly and sent a powerful palm at him.

Hu!

But to his shock, his palm struck empty air.

At some point, Zhang Xuan had suddenly disappeared from his sight.

"Shit..."

Narrowing his eyes, Elder Bai hurriedly turned around, only to see a sole appearing right before his eyes.

Pah!

Before he could even react, he was already sent flying. Crashing heavily onto the wall, the injury he sustained seemed to be even more severe than the previous victim, Elder Wu.

Elder Bai spewed large mouthfuls a blood, and for a moment, he was completely stunned.

The battle technique he had just executed was known as 'Shadow Plunder' and it had reached the level of Spirit intermediate-tier.

It was an extremely formidable move which contained innumerable changes and twists that confused one's opponent, making it difficult for one's opponent to differentiate a true attack from a feint.

Elder Bai thought that he would be able to toy with the other party once he executed this move... Yet, never in his wildest dreams did he expect for the other party to actually dodge his attack!

What made him even more faint-headed was that... unlike other conventional battle techniques where the mingmen was located at the crotch, below one's armpit, or back, the mingmen of Shadow Plunder was at one's qingming acupoint!

The qingming acupoint was located at one's glabella, thus making it exceptionally conspicuous and vulnerable. However, at the same time, it was precisely due to the vulnerability of the location that no one could have imagined that the weakness of the technique was right next to their eyes.

This was a secret that even his closest direct disciple and Pavilion Master Kang didn't know about. Yet, this fellow immediately charged up and struck him on this

mingmen...

In an instant, with the strike on his mingmen, the zhenqi throughout his body immediately dissipated. If not for him releasing his suppressed cultivation at the last moment, thus warding off the impact of the blow with his full might as a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle, he might have already died from that blow already!

The heck!

What the hell was going on?

I am a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert, and the person I'm fighting with was just a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan pinnacle fellow. Even though I suppressed my cultivation, how could I be sent flying with a single kick, and on top of that, almost losing my life from that impact...

I am here to gauge his strength, but in the end... I failed to even withstand a single blow...

The more he thought about it, the more stifled he felt. The immense frustration he was feeling left his face slightly livid.

Struggling down from the wall, Elder Bai began to alleviate the rampant zhenqi within him from that blow. At that moment, the young man walked up to him and asked, "Elder Bai, are you fine?"

"Humph!"

Elder Bai harrumphed coldly out of embarrassment. However, before he could fully recover, the young man before him lamented under his breath, "The reason why I let you go first is so that you can at least withstand a few more blows. In the end, you didn't even last the first blow. Aren't you a little too weak..."

Pu!

A mouthful of fresh blood spilt out.

The heck! Shouldn't those be my words?

I should be the one assessing your strength! How could I have ended up being subdued

in a single kick...

The more he thought about it, the angrier he felt. As such, he bellowed furiously, "Shut up!"

"Shut up? Does Elder Bai want to go another round?" the young man said.

"I..."

Elder Bai immediately went mute. There was a stifled sensation weighing down on his chest, leaving him suffocated. He found himself on the verge of crying.

The other party's movements were as swift as lightning. He would surely have been able to dodge the kick at his full strength, but with his strength suppressed to the level of a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan...

What left Elder Bai even more frustrated was that, even though he was caught off guard in the previous attack, he knew that it was completely impossible for him to avoid the kick with just the cultivation of a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan!

Harmonized with the environment, this move was exceptionally powerful and swift. On top of that, the other party had found his weakness. Even without considering the other moves that the other party might have in store, just these two factors was more than sufficient to guarantee him a ten out of ten matches loss rate.

Even more so, he was starting to think whether it might even be possible for him to defeat the other party when his cultivation is suppressed to that of a Transcendent Mortal 2-dan!

Didn't they all say that he's the easiest to deal with because of his weak cultivation? Like hell that is true...

"Let's go out!"

Afraid that he might die from anger at the words the other party might say, Elder Bai disregarded his injuries, stood up, and walked out of the door.

Seeing that the other party was so anxious to leave, Zhang Xuan shrugged and followed behind him.

...

Shocked by the sight, Pavilion Master Kang cursed. His voice immediately pulled everyone's gazes to the door of the chamber, and the sight left their eyes widened and blood threatened to spew from their mouths.

They saw Elder Bai walking out clutching his chest. A trail of blood flowed down the edge of his mouth, and a bright-red shoeprint was imprinted on his face.

"What happened?"

"Elder Bai... is wounded?"

"Wasn't he in the midst of assessing Zhang Xuan?"

...

Everyone looked at one another in bewilderment.

Elder Bai had gone in to test Zhang Xuan, but why did he seem to be in an even worse state than Elder Wu previously was?

Look at his face, that shoeprint, and his appearance... Aiyo, it would be better to avert one's gaze from him. Otherwise, one might really be tempted to puke.

"Elder Bai, this..."

Pavilion Master Kang looked at him with a bizarre expression.

"I..." If only there was a hole in the ground now, Elder Bai would surely leap in immediately.

"I'm sorry, Pavilion Master Kang. It's all my fault. I should have gone easy, just that... I didn't expect Pavilion Master Bai with his cultivation suppressed would be that weak... As such, I failed to control my strength and accidentally injured him. I apologize for that!" Zhang Xuan said apologetically.

"Weak?"

"Failed to control his strength?"

"Accidentally injured?"

...

The other candidates on the stage stared at one another with widened eyes, as though they had seen a ghost.

Fu Xiaochen and Ruohuan gongzi, who were gleeful a moment ago, stared at each other with trembling bodies. They seemed as if they might faint at any moment now.

They thought that this fellow had been knocked out in a single blow, but their conjecture was only half accurate. Someone was indeed knocked out... but that person was Elder Bai!

Are our eyes playing tricks on us?

That was a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle cultivator, an expert that was second only to Pavilion Master Kang in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. For him to be kicked in the face...

When they fought with Elder Bai before, they had exerted every last ounce of strength they had, but even so, they only managed to hold on for thirty blows. Yet, this fellow managed to defeat the other party so easily...

They could only feel their vision going dark. They dared not believe this to be real.

"This..."

Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and Ling shi had their mouths agape. They hurriedly turned their gazes over the Elder Bai, wanting to know the exact happenings from him. However, after seeing his nod his head helplessly, in an instant, it was as though lightning was rumbling around them. The shock they suffered as so great that it would no longer be surprising if they were to fall dead now.

They had just agreed on that due to Zhang shi's rapid rise in cultivation, it was impossible for him to survive ten blows from Elder Bai... Only at this moment did they know that it was Elder Bai who was too weak for the other party...

"Alright, now that Zhang shi has completed his test... Allow me to reannounce the results!"

Forced to change his words once more, Pavilion Master Kang's face flushed, "In first place, Zhang Shi. In second place, Fu Xiaochen. In third place, Ruohuan Gongzi. In fourth place, Feng Mosheng and Du Hu..."

Once again, obtaining the first place, Zhang Xuan proved to be the dark horse of the selection round once again.

There was no choice but to give him first place! The test was to withstand as many blows from Elder Bai as possible, but he went on ahead to knock the other party out... The difference between him and the other candidates was as great as the difference between heaven and earth. There was no choice but to concede to him!

"Alright, let's move on to the third test!"

Knowing that this would never come to an end if they were to dawdle on this matter, Pavilion Master Kang glanced at the surroundings and decisively announced.

"We've covered Soul Depth and cultivation in the first two tests. Even though these two factors are important, they are only the fundamentals to becoming a master teacher! To become a truly outstanding master teacher, one has to be proficient in the art of knowledge impartation!

"Thus, this shall be what will be assessed in the third round!

"In a usual examination, the examinees would hide their identity, join an academy as a teacher, and take a class for a period of several months to two years. After which, the students of the examinees will be put against one another, and this will serve as an evaluation of the teacher's ability to impart knowledge... However, there are only two months left to the Master Teacher Tournament, so we don't have enough time to do so much. Thus... I thought of a much more efficient and effective way to test the candidates' ability to impart knowledge.

"That is... Continuity of Spiritual Wisdom." Pavilion Master Kang declared.

"Continuity of Spiritual Wisdom? What is that?"

"I'm not too sure as well. I've only heard of Spiritual Wisdom. If I'm not mistaken, it's an ability that painters would gain upon after reaching 5-star. It's an ability to infuse wisdom into the characters of the painting, granting them the ability to absorb spiritual energy from the air and sustain themselves for a very long time."

"Now that you speak of it, I do remember it being so. Such a work is known as a painting of the sixth level!"

"Indeed. Reality Depiction, Spiritual Canvas, Infused Intentions, Breathtaking Verisimilitude, Spirit Creation, Spiritual Wisdom... Only 5-star painters are capable of creating a painting of this level, and unfortunately, there's no one possessing such ability in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance!"

"Since Spiritual Wisdom is an ability belonging to that of a 5-star painter, what could Continuity of Spiritual Wisdom be? And how can it assess a person's ability to impart knowledge?"

...

The crowd below discussed with perplexed expressions. None of them were able to understand the concept of Continuity of Spiritual Wisdom.

Even Zhang Xuan frowned as well.

However, there was one exception. Upon hearing the content of the test, Ruohuan gongzi's face immediately glowed in delight, and he clenched his fists in agitation.

As a 4-star painter, this test was advantageous to him.

Chapter 538

First Up, Zhang Xuan

"Seems like everyone isn't too sure on what it is about. Since that's the case, allow me to explain!"

Seeing the doubt in everyone's eyes, Pavilion Master Kang smiled. "I believe everyone here should be aware of the concept of Spiritual Wisdom. It is the sixth level of a painting, and at this level, the characters within the painting are able to absorb spiritual energy from the surroundings to materialize.

"And the idea of Continuity of Spiritual Wisdom actually is to... conduct a lecture for these painted characters!"

"Conduct a lecture for the characters in the painting?"

Hearing the explanation, everyone was stunned.

The concept of 'Spiritual Wisdom' was different from intelligence. Even though the characters in the painting had gained sentience, as beings forged of spiritual energy, they had no intelligence. Since they had no intelligence, what was the use of imparting them knowledge? Could they even understand the content of the lesson?

"Since all of us here are master teachers, you all should know that a master teacher's lecture usually utilizes Impartation of Heaven's Will. The more one's theory is recognized by the heavens, the greater the concentration of spiritual energy gathered in the surroundings!" Pavilion Master Kang said.

Everyone nodded their heads.

Impartation of Heaven's Will did have the ability to gather spiritual energy. It was said that whenever Kong shi conducted a lesson, the amount of spiritual energy that gathered was more than sufficient to create a spirit mountain.

Putting aside Kong shi, even Hong shi Hong Qian, a 5-star primary master teacher of Hongfeng Empire Master Teacher Pavilion who had just conducted a lesson here, was

capable of Spirit Gathering Diction. Nourished under the immense concentration of spiritual energy in the area, those participating in the lecture unwittingly experienced a rise in their cultivation.

This was the ability that all master teachers possessed. However, its effectiveness depended on the proficiency of the person.

Hongfeng Empire was a vassal state of Huanyu Empire.

Just like kingdoms, empire could be classified as Conferred, Tier 1, Tier 2, and Unranked.

Huanyu was a Tier 2 Empire whereas Hongfeng was, just like how Tianxuan was an Unranked Kingdom, an Unranked Empire. It was on the same level as Mingxia Empire, Henghai Empire, and Myriad Kingdom Alliance

However, a master teacher of this level would never remain in an Unranked Empire forever. It wouldn't be long before the regional headquarters summoned him over to an even higher tiered Master Teacher Pavilion to study. In fact, the reason why Hong Qian was dispatched here was because he was heading to Huanyu Empire.

The top-ranking geniuses in the Master Teacher Tournament, on top of earning huge rewards, would be given a chance to study at Huanyu Empire's Master Teacher Academy.

"Even though painted characters that have gained Spiritual Wisdom can't live on like ordinary lifeforms, they are able to absorb spiritual energy and sustain themselves for a very long time. As such, they are exceptionally sensitive to the spiritual energy in their surroundings. If the theories one speaks of in their lecture are aligned with the essence of the world, spiritual energy will gather, thus allowing them to sustain for a longer period of time. On the other hand, failure to do so will make them dissipate swiftly! Through this, we can accurately assess a master teacher's ability to impart knowledge without worrying for any bias," Pavilion Master Kang explained.

"I see!"

"Such a method would indeed be the fairest..."

Understanding the situation, the crowd nodded their heads in agreement.

As those Spiritual Wisdom beings only recognized spiritual energy, the judgement for the test would be impartial.

After all, human judgement was always unwittingly or wittingly tied with emotions. If a person finds himself liking a certain teacher's lessons very much, he might be overestimate the effectiveness on the lesson. At the same time, he would tend to underplay the effectiveness of the lessons of other teachers.

Such bias was set into the personality of humans and it couldn't be changed.

After all, other than Empyrean Kong shi, no matter how formidable a master teacher was, they couldn't possibly win the trust and admiration of everyone else.

If they were to find students here to assess the teaching capability of the candidates, given that Ruohuan gongzi and Fu Xiaochen, as famous geniuses of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, had many fans here, it would surely be easier for them to win the students over. This would've made the test unfair.

On the other hand, the painting characters didn't possess such emotions. They wouldn't be awed by one's reputation or be charmed by a person's appearance. Instead, they would only react to the movement of the spiritual energy generated by the lecture. This would ensure the fairness of the test.

"Un!"

Coming to a realization, Zhang Xuan nodded his head as well.

He had learned about Spiritual Wisdom from the painting books he had collected into the Library of Heaven's Path. Spiritual Wisdom beings only reacted to spiritual energy. Even Impartation of Heaven's Will couldn't influence them at all.

The same went for painters as well. Unless one was the painter of the very painting, their ability to influence the actions of Spiritual Wisdom beings was severely limited.

"Since everyone understands the rules, let's begin the competition then. Elder Yun, I'll be troubling you this time around!"

Seeing that everyone in the hall had no objections to the matter, Pavilion Master Kang invited Elder Yun up with a smile.

"Don't worry!"

An elder stood up from the crowd.

"I knew that it would be Elder Yun!"

"Elder Yun, as the only 4-star pinnacle painter of the Master Teacher Pavilion, is the most authoritative on the subject of paintings. Naturally, the test concerning Spiritual Wisdom should be invigilated by him! More importantly... that 'Painting of Soaring Birds' is a masterpiece left behind by a 5-star painter. It will be the most appropriate to use it for the examination!"

"That painting is Elder Yun's most prized possession and he never takes it out. I've long heard of it, but I've never got the chance to see it before. Looks like my eyes will be in for a feast this time around!"

"Indeed! Sixth level paintings are extremely rare. Most likely, one won't be able to find a second one throughout the entire Myriad Kingdom Alliance!"

"That might not necessarily be so. I heard that the Appraiser Hall has a work that is on par with this. However, it'll be difficult to access the items there..."

...

Upon seeing the elder, hushed discussions could be heard among the crowd.

Just like Ruohuan gongzi, Elder Yun's main supporting occupation was a painter. Furthermore, his rank was significantly higher than the latter, reaching 4-star pinnacle.

At this level, even excluding his identity as a master teacher, he could be considered as a top-notch figure in Myriad Kingdom City.

"At the pavilion master's request, I shall be conducting this test!"

Ignoring the discussions below, Elder Yun walked up to the candidates, flicked his wrist, and a rolled-up painting appeared in his hands. "This 'Painting of Soaring Birds' was a gift my painting teacher bestowed to me."

Huala!

As he spoke, the painting abruptly unrolled and a flock of birds soared into the air, chirping delightfully as they frolicked about.

These birds were completely lifelike, and unlike the beings created from a Spirit Creation painting, it was impossible to tell a real from fake if they were mingled with one another. After escaping from the painting, they flew in a space three chi around the painting. Only after two minutes had passed did they finally return to the painting.

"The characters in a Spiritual Wisdom painting can absorb spiritual energy from the surroundings to materialize in an area around the painting. However, there's a time limit to it, and two minutes is the limit! Whoever who is able to keep them materialized for the longest time possible with their lecture will be the winner of this round!"

Elder Yun elaborated on the rules of the test before turning his gaze to the candidates.

"Alright, let's start the test! Who wants to go first?"

"This..."

The candidates stared at one another.

Even though they had some understanding of painting, they had never come into contact with Spiritual Wisdom paintings before. They had no experience in sustaining the materialization of a Spiritual Wisdom being and they had nothing to refer to as well.

Ruohuan gongzi was about to take a step forward when he abruptly paused. Turning to Zhang Xuan, he smiled.

"Zhang shi, why don't... you go first? Since you placed first in the earlier two rounds, your ability to impart knowledge must be extraordinary as well. Why don't you allow us to take a look so that we can learn from you?"

Before the tournament, the opponent which he was the wariest about was Fu Xiaochen. However, this had changed after seeing Zhang Xuan's outstanding performance in the previous two rounds.

"Me? Alright!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

"It can't be that you wish to go last every time just so that you can make use of the

experience of others to better your... What did you say? Alright? You're willing to go up first?"

Ruohuan gongzi thought that the other party would reject the invitation immediately just like in the first round and thus, he had even prepared a long speech to pressure the other party. However, halfway through his words, he heard the other party's reply and froze. It felt as though his punch had struck empty space, and this made him so stifled that he felt like spurting blood.

Continuity of Spiritual Wisdom. Most master teachers had never heard of such a bizarre test before. Shouldn't the other party be thinking of learning from the experience of others before making a move?

Why did he agree to it so readily?

Wasn't he being too eccentric?!

"Elder Yun, allow me!"

Uninterested by the immense shock Ruohuan gongzi was suffering from, Zhang Xuan stepped forward.

In truth, he had wanted to allow others to go first due to having never seen such a test before. However, given that he had gone last for the previous two tests, he felt embarrassed to continue acting like that.

In any case, since he had made sense of the rules already, there probably wasn't too much of a difference between going first and going last.

"You?"

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan stepping forward, Elder Yun's mouth twitched.

He had seen the proceedings of the previous tests. This black horse that came from nowhere destroyed Elder Wu in the first round and nearly killed Elder Bai in the second... If there was one candidate he was the most fearful of, it would definitely be him.

Who knew what kind of mess he would cause this time around.

But even so, he wasn't in a place to stop the other party from going first. Thus, he nodded his head and said, "As soon as I activate the painting and the birds soar out from it, you can begin your lecture. The content you are allowed to lecture on is not limited. Your ranking will be decided by how much spiritual energy you can gather and how long the birds stay materialized for!"

"Un!"

Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

The rules were simple, there was nothing doubtful about it.

Seeing that the other party had fully comprehended the rules, Elder Yun placed his palm on the painting.

"Alright, let's begin then!"

Weng!

The birds from before soared out from the painting.

As expected of a Spiritual Wisdom painting. Absorbing spiritual energy from the air, the birds that emerged from the painting were exceptionally eye-catching and there was a bizarre sense of aesthetics to them.

"Since this is a painting, I'll talk about painting then!"

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan made up his decision.

As long as the lecture he spoke of was able to pull in spiritual energy from the surroundings, there was no difference to the content he spoke of.

"Painting isn't just a depiction of reality. More importantly, one has to harness their emotions into their work before an art piece can be granted as soul..."

The reorganized Heaven's Path Paint Art appeared before him, and he began deciphering it slowly based on his comprehension of it.

In Tianxuan Kingdom, he had duplicated all of the painting books in Master Lu Chen's study. After which, in the libraries at Tianwu Kingdom, Honghai Kingdom, and various

other locations, there were a significant number of books on painting as well.

After organizing and assimilating the knowledge harnessed within those books, most probably, even Elder Yun, a 4-star pinnacle painter, would be far from a match for him in the subject.

If not for that, how could he possibly have induced the Appraiser Hall's 'Rousing from Drunken Dreams' to reach the seventh level just by granting it a name? Even if he was able to see through the painting's flaws via the Library of Heaven's Path, without a strong foundation in painting, it would surely be impossible for him to accomplish this feat.

His voice was well-paced, and his explanations for the profound and abstract concepts were shockingly simple. More importantly, they were all directed to the true essence of painting itself. His lecture was well-planned, slowly delving from the surface into the depths, pulling everyone along with his line of thoughts.

If there was one thing to criticize anything about his lecture, it would be that he was only lecturing on the bare fundamentals of painting.

"I didn't expect for Zhang Shi's comprehension of painting to reach such an astounding level!"

After listening for a moment, Pavilion Master Kang's face was marked with shock.

He thought that Zhang Shi would use Impartation of Heaven's Will to lecture on topics regarding cultivation. He didn't expect the latter's comprehension of painting to be so deep as well.

It seemed like the other party's deep knowledge didn't just stop at cultivation techniques and cultivation itself.

As expected of a master teacher who was able to even beguile him, formidable!

"The consumption of spiritual energy by Spiritual Wisdom beings to sustain their materialization is exceedingly high. Even with the 'Spirit Gathering Diction' of a 5-star master teacher, the materialization of Spiritual Wisdom beings still can't be sustained for too long."

Just as Pavilion Master Kang was immersed in his awe for the young man on the stage,

Su shi turned to look at him and asked, "Pavilion Master Kang, in your view, how long do you think Zhang shi can sustain the materialization for?"

Chapter 539

Return My Bird!

Spiritual Wisdom painting had been granted sentience by the painter, allowing them to absorb spiritual energy from the surroundings to emerge from a painting.

As their existences hinged on spiritual energy itself, their spiritual energy requirement was very high, and they were exceptionally sensitive to fluctuations of spiritual energy in the surroundings. Under normal conditions, it would be impossible to sustain their materialization for too long. In fact, even under the Spirit Gathering Diction of a 5-star master teacher, their materialization will only be extended by a slightly longer period of time.

As such, the test wasn't as easy as it seemed.

In Su shi's view, even though Zhang Xuan was talented in painting as well, he was only a 3-star painter (as well as from Tianwu Kingdom), and not to mention, the content he spoke of was the bare fundamentals. It would be difficult for him to gather sufficient spiritual energy to sustain the Spiritual Wisdom for too long.

"If he had lectured on cultivation, I think he would have lasted for fifteen minutes or so. After all, even Elder Yun only managed to sustain the materialization for thirteen minutes!" Pavilion Master Kang replied, after a moment of contemplation.

After confirming the content of the test, Elder Yun had tried it out himself. However, despite being a 4-star master teacher, he was only able to sustain the materialization for thirteen minutes.

Given that Zhang Xuan's comprehension of cultivation was even above his, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to surpass Elder Yun's record.

But even so, fifteen minutes was probably the cap.

After all, the more basic the content was, the harder it was to draw in spiritual energy.

"Given that he's lecturing on painting... Not to mention, the bare fundamentals of it, I

think even eight minutes will be a hurdle for him!"

"That's my evaluation as well!" Su shi nodded.

Even though the two of them weren't painters, they had still browsed through a fair number of books regarding the topic. It wasn't hard for them to tell that Zhang Xuan was only touching on the most basic concepts. On top of that, there was no clear movement in the spiritual energy in the surroundings. It would be nigh impossible for him to sustain the materialization for any longer than that.

"With just eight minutes, it'll be difficult for him to take first place. Ruohuan gongzi, as a 4-star painter and 4-star master teacher, will definitely be able to surpass the ten minutes barrier!"

Ling shi couldn't help but interject.

The other two nodded their heads in agreement.

Jun Ruohuan, as a painter, was extremely familiar with the concept of Spiritual Wisdom. With this advantage, it wouldn't be too difficult for him to maintain the materialization for more than ten minutes. With just eight minutes, it would be difficult for Zhang shi to secure even the second place.

"Look, the Spiritual Wisdom is already beginning to sway. It's already on the verge of dissipating!"

Everyone turned their gazes over. At the current moment, the chirping of the birds above the painting was slowly getting less and less crisp, and their body was swaying ceaselessly, as though a candlelight on the verge of extinguishing.

"But it has only been three minutes! How can his results be this poor?"

"Indeed. Even without conducting a lecture, those Spiritual beings are able to sustain their materialization for two minutes. What is going on?"

Everyone frowned.

Given how Spiritual Wisdom beings can sustain their existence for two minutes even without any external assistance, for the birds to shake at the third minute... This showed that the spiritual energy drawn in by Zhang shi was minimal, perhaps even

negligible!

"I'll be taking first place for sure!"

Ruohuan gongzi's eyes lit up.

Given how that fellow was unable to sustain the materialization for even five minutes, he would surely finish in sixth place. Even though Ruohuan gongzi's results were inferior to Zhang Xuan in the first two rounds, with this opportunity, he was confident in making a comeback and obtaining first place overall!

In the end, how could a person who came from a lower tiered kingdom compare to a Conferred Kingdom's top-notch genius? Master Teacher Tournament was a test on one's capability in all aspects. One couldn't hope to achieve a good placing with just overwhelming strength or a powerful Soul Depth only.

"Looks like inviting him to go up first was a good thing... Without any experience, how can he hope to achieve good results?"

Ruohuan gongzi's lips curled up.

Given how even the master teachers of Myriad Kingdom Alliance had never heard of Continuity of Spiritual Wisdom, what could a countryside bumpkin like the other party know about it?

Perhaps, if he were to get the other party to go up first for the subsequent rounds as well, the other party might fare poorly as well.

The more Ruohuan gongzi thought about it, the more excited he felt. It was to the extent that he nearly burst out laughing.

Fu Xiaochen also heaved a sigh of relief. He was currently in the third place, and if that fellow were to continue clinching the top spot, he would surely be eliminated. Thus, upon seeing this situation, he felt relieved instead.

"It's a relief that he didn't cause anything this time around..." Elder Yun wiped the sweat off his forehead.

Given the huge ruckus that fellow caused in the first two round, Elder Yun thought that the other party might do the same in this round, leaving him in an incomparably

awkward position... But from the looks of it now, he was worrying needlessly. Painting seemed to be a weakness of the other party...

Just as the burden was lifted off his heart and he was waiting for the Spiritual Wisdom beings to disappear, he suddenly thought of something and froze.

"Something is wrong... If the Spiritual Wisdom beings are about to dissipate, they should do so in less than a few breaths. Since that is a fact, how could they still be materialized at this very moment? On top of that, even though the Spiritual Wisdom beings were swaying violently, it doesn't seem like they are about to dissipate..."

Under normal circumstances, as soon as the body of a Spiritual Wisdom being starts to sway, it'll disappear within seconds. If so, how could these Spiritual Energy beings sway for a minute but still remain materialized?

"Wait! Why does it seem like the body of the Spiritual Energy beings are getting more and more substantial instead?"

"Now that you speak of it..."

The others were also starting to realize that something was off.

They had carefully assessed the dissipation of the Spiritual Wisdom beings when Elder Yun opened up the scroll and did a demonstration before the test. Once swaying occurred, the gathered spiritual energy would dissipate swiftly.

Yet, even though the Spiritual Energy beings were swaying so violently that normal birds would have become stark naked by now, the spiritual energy forming them didn't dissipate. Instead, as Zhang shi continued with his lesson, they seemed to be becoming more and more corporeal...

This was completely defying common sense! Those Spiritual Energy beings should have dissipated by that swaying, and yet, why did it seem like they were being nourished instead...

What was going on?

"Wait, something is wrong..."

A deep frown appeared on Elder Yun's forehead. Just like that, another few more

minutes passed. But even as Zhang Xuan was about to pass the ten minutes mark, the Spiritual Energy beings still hadn't dissipated. On the contrary, their bodies were becoming more and more corporeal. It was as though an image was slowly coming to life. Suddenly, Elder Yun thought of something and his eyes narrowed.

"Could this be...

"But... impossible!" Elder Yun exclaimed as frenzy covered his entire face.

"What's wrong with Elder Yun?"

"It can't be that all the elders who were tested by that lad will be reduced to such a state?"

Seeing the usually composed Elder Yun acting in such a manner, Elder Wu and Elder Bai's mouths twitched as well.

The both of them had been severely injured while assessing that lad, and now, Elder Yun was acting in a similar manner as well... There seemed to be something really sinister about that lad.

"Elder Yun!" Pavilion Master Kang walked up and patted his shoulder. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing... Just that, I thought of something unbelievable..." Elder Yun regained his senses from that pat and said.

"Something unbelievable?" Pavilion Master Kang frowned.

"Look..." Elder Yun pointed to the Spiritual Wisdom beings in front of Zhang Xuan. "These Spiritual Wisdom beings have been swaying for quite some time now, and it has been at least ten minutes since it started. However, not only have they not dissipated, they are even getting more and more corporeal..."

Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head in agreement.

Everyone had seen it happening and they thought it was weird as well. Was there really something wrong with it?

"If I'm not wrong, this isn't dissipation but..."

Elder Yun's lips trembled in shock, "...Elation of Unearthed Disposition, Enlightened Spirit!"

"Enlightened Spirit? You mean... the seventh level of painting? In a painting of that level, all beings, be it animals or plants, will possess their own sentience as though true living beings. They are capable of soaring beyond the painting and maintain their form for a very long time..."

Pavilion Master Kang was taken aback.

"That's right!" Elder Yun nodded.

"But that can't be! To create an Enlightened Spirit painting requires one to be at least a 6-star painter to modify or redraw the painting! To do so via a lecture... How is that even possible?"

Pavilion Master Kang widened his eyes in disbelief.

Painters that had comprehended that level could easily draw birds that could soar through the skies.

Rumor had it that a formidable 6-star painter had once drawn a divine crane on a wall and soared into the skies on its materialized form, leaving behind the legend of 'Immortal Departing on the Divine Crane'.

There was also another legend depicting a grandmaster painter being caught in a spirit beast stampede. As such, he drew a pinnacle spirit beast whose aura sent all of the spirit beasts fleeing in fright.

All occupations, upon reaching a certain level, would possess unimaginable strength and means.

Just that, this miracle needed one to be at least a 6-star painter to work on a painting on the spot... For a Spiritual Wisdom to become an Enlightened Spirit via a lecture, that was completely unprecedented and unheard of.

"The content that Zhang shi spoke of is extremely compatible with the Spiritual Wisdom beings. Not only did it draw in spiritual energy, it even caused these Spiritual Wisdom beings to start cultivating... If I'm not mistaken, the swaying is actually an attempt to rid themselves of the impure spiritual energy from before, thus turning

their energy even more concrete... In other words, Ridding Phantasm to Materialize!" Elder Yun said.

"Ridding Phantasm to Materialize? How... is that possible?" Pavilion Master Kang was so astonished that he nearly fainted on the spot.

Are you serious?

Just by conducting a lecture for the Spiritual Wisdom beings, they actually underwent Ridding Phantasm to Materialize and became Enlightened Spirits... Why did it sound like utter nonsense?

"I also find it hard to believe, but there is no plausible explanation other than this!" Elder Yun said.

Even though he had guessed it, he still found it hard to believe. That was why he lost his composure for a moment.

Suddenly, Pavilion Master Kang thought of a question.

"If that's true... Usually, the breakthrough is done by modifying the painting. As the Spiritual Wisdom beings are in the painting while undergoing the breakthrough, the painting serves as their home, and thus, they can be summoned back through it. But if the Spiritual Wisdom beings were to achieve a breakthrough via such a lecture... Would they still return to the painting?"

If the Enlightened Spirits were to originate from the painting, even if they were to leave, they would still return to the painting when they needed to rest. However, these Spiritual Wisdom beings were making a breakthrough outside of the painting. Given that they didn't materialize from the painting, there would be nothing tying them to the painting. If so, would they still return?

If they were to fly away and refuse to return to the painting, how would the results be tabulated? More importantly, how could the test continue under such circumstances?

"Ah? Crap, don't allow him to continue speaking..."

Elder Yun froze for a moment before hurriedly shouting. However, before he could do any practical action, the birds in the painting suddenly stopped swaying and a harmonized chirp suddenly echoed in the hall.

Jijijiji! Qiuqiuqiuqiu!

Their pleasant call reverberated across the entire hall. It was as if a group of playful birds had visited them, and their presence in itself was an enjoyment.

At the same time, the slightly incorporeal birds from before seemed to have achieved a qualitative evolution. Their feathers became more lifelike, and their claws and peak became more defined. It was as if they had truly come to life this time around.

Hu!

After the chirping, the birds flapped their wings and darted out of the hall, headed for the distance. It didn't take long before they disappeared from everyone's sight.

Seeing the departing birds and the empty paper left on the table, Elder Yun froze for a moment before his body began trembling.

That was an unparalleled work that his teacher had left for him. He cherished it so much that his heart ached just by showing it to another. Even his closest of friends had to plead with him for a very long time just for a glance.

He thought that it should be fine taking it out for such an important test, but who knew that... the Spiritual Wisdom beings contained within it would actually all fly away!

What the heck?!

Now that all of the Spiritual Wisdom beings had flown away, what use was this blank piece of paper?

He had just heaved a sigh of relief in having been spared when such a sight occurred... Was this fellow here to compete in the selection round or to wreak havoc?

With a trembling body, he walked up to Zhang Xuan. At this moment, he felt so much rage that he hated the fact he couldn't tear that imbecile before him into pieces.

"My bird! You, return my bird..."

Chapter 540

I'll Just Draw Another One For You

My 'bird'?

Return my 'bird'?

At that moment, the master teachers in the room hadn't realized that those birds were leaving for good. As such, they immediately thought of the other meaning of Elder Yun's words. They immediately turned to gaze at the latter's crotch and shivered in disgust.

It seemed like... Zhang shi had only conducted a lecture. How in the world does your 'bird' come into play in this situation?

Furthermore, wasn't it still attached?

For a 4-star master teacher to ask another person about his 'bird' in public, truly, this was... too shameful!

Many female master teachers blushed in embarrassment upon hearing so... As a painter, Elder Yun possessed a refined disposition so many thought of him as an upright and dashing person. To think that he would be an old pervert instead!

"That's not right, maybe Elder Yun is referring to the birds that just escaped!"

Slowly, some among the crowd realized it.

"Ah?"

The crowd was taken aback, and that person described his observation.

"After listening to Zhang shi's lesson, those birds seem to have suddenly become lively. They escaped from the restraints of the painting paper and... flew away!"

"Flew away? This 'Painting of Soaring Birds' is centered around the birds, and its

greatest value lies in those Spiritual Wisdom birds. If they were to fly away... wouldn't the painting become totally worthless..."

"Indeed! That's precisely the reason why Elder Yun went into a frenzy. That is a Spiritual Wisdom painting, it's worth a huge fortune, you know..."

"For a treasure which he cherished so much to be reduced into a worthless piece of paper... There is no one who can retain their rationality before that!"

...

Hearing the explanation, everyone finally understood what was going on. They stared at one another as their mouth twitched violently.

On the other hand, Elder Wu and Elder Bai stared at one another in relief.

At the very least, they were only injured. All they had to do was to condition themselves for a period of time to make a complete recovery. On the other hand, that painting was Elder Yun's most prized possession. For it to become worthless in the blink of an eye, it was already a huge fortune that he didn't lose sight of himself and tear that fellow apart on the spot...

Ruohuan gongzi, who just a moment ago had still been gleeful at being able to take first place this time around, cried tearfully.

"Just by undergoing a lecture, a Spiritual Wisdom being actually advanced to become an Enlightened Spirit and flew away..."

He had made some calculations before and he was confident that he'd be able to get the Spiritual Wisdom being to maintain its materialization for over ten minutes. But this fellow... actually allowed the Spiritual Wisdom being to fly away for good...

What the heck!

Do you need to be so fierce?

If you do it like that, how do you expect for the rest of us to compete with you? If you always do that, you'll find yourself without friends...

"Cough cough. Elder Yun, calm down..."

Seeing his usually composed old friend getting so agitated that he looked like he could murder someone, Elder Su hurried forward to calm him.

"Calm down? The heck that can I calm down now! That's a painting that my teacher left to me. I was still planning to study it every day so that I can achieve a breakthrough to become a 5-star painter... Given that this has happened, how in the world can I reach higher ranks now?"

Lowering his head to glance at the white paper on the table, Elder Yun gritted his teeth.

Who said that this was just a test, and it would be extremely simple?

Come out! I promise I won't hit you...

Just as he was frenzied, the young man opposite him spoke with a slightly doubtful voice, "I hadn't finished my lecture when you scared those birds away... How are you going to tabulate the timing for me like that?"

Elder Yun wasn't the only one who was angry. Zhang Xuan was also a little frustrated at the situation.

Wasn't this old man a little too unreliable?

He was in the midst of imparting the Heaven's Path Paint Art to help these Spiritual Wisdom beings gather their strength. If he were to succeed, they would be able to fly wherever they pleased and maintain their existence as long as they wanted to. Who knew that... before he was done, this fellow bellowed loudly, scaring all of the birds away.

Now that all of the birds had left, how was his result supposed to be calculated?

How wronged he would be if he were to lose because of this!

After all, he put a lot of effort into this test...

"Tabulate the timing... The Painting of Soaring Birds is already gone, and you're still telling me about the timing?!"

Elder Yun nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

Tabulate your head!

You wrecked my treasure, but not only did you not feel the slightest guilt, you are still only thinking about your test... Are you really that gutsy or is there something wrong with your head?

"Cough cough, Zhang shi. You should also tone it down. The value of the Painting of Soaring Birds lay in those birds. Their disappearance also means that the treasure has been rendered worthless. It is natural that Elder Yun... is in a bad mood because of it!"

Stepping forward, Pavilion Master Kang attempted to calm the situation.

"Rendered worthless?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Since the scroll is still here, one just has to draw the birds back. Is there a need to make such a fuss about it?"

"That's a painting of the sixth level! Only 5-star painters are capable of producing it... This is the only one that can be found in Myriad Kingdom City, and you speak of drawing them back? That's easy for you to say!"

Sensing an opportunity, Ruohuan gongzi clasped his fist and stepped forward, "Teacher, since the Painting of Soaring Birds has been destroyed, the rest of us are unable to continue with the examination. Why don't we change the format of the test then..."

The other party's lecture had made even the Spiritual Wisdom beings evolve to become Enlightened Spirits. He wouldn't be able to triumph over the other party for sure if they were to continue with this test. If so, he might as well make use of this opportunity to change the test.

"Un, you're right... The Painting of Soaring Birds is the only Spiritual Wisdom painting in the entire Myriad Kingdom Alliance. Since it's ruined now, the rest of you are indeed unable to proceed with the test..."

Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head in agreement.

If only he'd know that this would be the case, he would have never allowed this fellow to take the test first. Now, not only was the painting ruined, the other candidates also lost their chances at taking the test...

The Continuity of Spiritual Wisdom was the best assessment for impartation of

knowledge he could think of. This situation was too abrupt, and he couldn't think of a better idea on the spot.

"If there are no better ideas, why don't we just find a few students, blindfold them, and vary our voices so that they won't be able to recognize us. The test should still be relatively fair this way as well..." Ruohuan gongzi suggested.

"There's no rush for that. Allow me to confer with the other elders first... Ah? What's going on..."

Nodding his head, Pavilion Master Kang rubbed his glabella, frustrated by the situation before him when he suddenly saw something in his peripheral vision that astounded him.

"Teacher, what's wrong?"

Seeing his teacher losing his composure, Ruohuan gongzi was taken aback. He immediately traced his teacher's glance and he failed to catch his breath and faint on the spot.

Unknowingly, the young man whom he had just criticized was standing before the painting. In each of his hands was a brush, and currently, harmoniously chirping birds had reappeared on the previously blank 'Painting of Soaring Birds'.

"All of the birds have returned?" Pavilion Master Kang asked hoarsely.

"It's not that they returned... but... Zhang shi just drew them on!" Fu Xiaochen replied with a quivering voice.

"Just drawn them on..." Ruohuan gongzi's body trembled.

That was a Spiritual Wisdom painting! It was a masterpiece that only 5-star painters were capable of producing... To paint it out so casually, are you for real?

More importantly... even 5-star painters had to contemplate for many months to conceptualize and perfect such a painting. It was a grueling task created with an astounding level of effort... Yet, before he was done speaking, the other party was already done restoring the painting...

Need you be that fast?

Unable to maintain his composure, Ruohuan gongzi asked, "What kind of painting method did he use?"

To finish a painting in just ten breaths or so, what kind of painting method could be that fast?

"Dual Traversing Dragons..." Fu Xiaochen replied in disbelief.

"You mean the technique... that only street side craftsmen use?" Ruohuan gongzi's vision went dark.

If you had used some profound technique, I would have just conceded...

But to use the Dual Traversing Dragon which street side craftsmen use to mass produce paintings, not to mention... for a sixth level painting... Brother, tell me the truth. You aren't really a 3-star painter, right? You are actually a 6-star painter in disguise, aren't you?

It was laughable that he leaped in delight when he heard that the test was Continuity of Spiritual Wisdom. He thought that the other party would surely fail terribly when going first...

If he'd known that the other party was such a formidable painter, he would have never acted so arrogantly!

Keeping the brush and ink back into his storage ring, Zhang Xuan said impassively, "Alright, Elder Yun. I've restored your painting for you. It doesn't seem... too difficult to do so!"

He thought that it was a big deal after hearing Elder Yun screaming and yelling. Wasn't it just a painting? If the birds were to fly away, he could just paint some more on for the other party. Was there any need to make such a huge fuss?

"This..."

Hurrying forward, Elder Yun lowered his head to examine the painting before him.

After a quick glance, his lips quivered, and he stared at the young man before him as though he was a monster.

This painting was identical to the one he saw before. If not for the fact that the ink wasn't dry yet, he would have really suspected that everything that had happened before was a hallucination on his part.

With just a glance, the other party was able remember every single detail of the picture perfectly-the arrangement, amount of ink used for each stroke, positioning... and not to mention, even the artistic conception...

How in the world did he do it?

One must know that every painter had their individual experience and style. When copying another's work, chances were that one would unwittingly incorporate their style into it as well. As such, it was hard for any painting to be completely identical with another. Yet, not only was the painting before him completely identical to its previous version, even the 'feeling' it exuded was no different... This was completely inconceivable.

Even a 6-star painter would be incapable of such a feat!

Actually, at Zhang Xuan's current level, he could only produce a painting of such a level by copying from another. If he were to paint by himself, while he was still capable of producing a Spiritual Wisdom painting, it would be hard for him to reach the level of artistic conception contained within the Painting of Soaring Birds.

After all, even though he had grasped Heaven's Path Paint Art, it was only at the level around 4-star pinnacle and 5-star primary.

The main reason why he could produce a completely identical painting was because of the Eye of Insight.

The Eye of Insight was capable of peering into minuscule details that one's physical eyes were incapable of perceiving. Back when Elder Yun took out the painting, Zhang Xuan had examined it properly with the Eye of Insight. As such, restoring it to its ordinary form wasn't a challenge to him at all.

If he had tried to do it with his own capability instead of copying the previous work, it would truly have been hard for him to reach a painting of such a level.

However, Elder Yun was unaware of all these facts. As such, he was shocked by the other party. He felt so impressed that he could almost kowtow to the other party at

this instant.

Pavilion Master Kang walked forward and asked, "How is it?"

Recovering from his shock, Elder Yun swallowed a mouthful and saliva and said, "It's exactly the same as before. We can continue on with the test..."

"Since Elder Yun said that it was fine, let's continue on with the test then!"

Heaving a sigh of relief, Pavilion Master Kang turned to look at the crowd.

Given that the Painting of Soaring Birds had been restored, there was no longer any need for him to worry about varying the format of the test anymore.

"..." Ruohuan gongzi was on the verge of tears.

After such a huge ruckus, his efforts turned out to be futile. If only he'd known so in advance, he wouldn't have wasted his breath...

Frustrated, Ruohuan gongzi mustered his courage and challenged the examination. However, due to his unstable state of mind, he only managed to sustain for eleven minutes before the Spiritual Wisdom being dissipated.

After him, Fu Xiaochen, Feng Mosheng, and the others also stepped forward to challenge the test.

What was surprising was that Luo Xi had managed to sustain for twelve minutes, achieving a result even higher than Ruohuan gongzi.

"Alright, I shall announce the results of the test. Zhang shi, through his lecture, managed to induce the evolution of the Spiritual Wisdom beings into Enlightened Spirits... and as of yet, they haven't returned. No one should have any qualms about him being ranked first, right?"

After everyone was done taking the test, Pavilion Master Kang began announcing the results and scanned the crowd for any objections.

"Right..."

Everyone's lips twitched. Given how the other party managed to materialize all of the

Spiritual Wisdom beings fully and produced a painting of the sixth level... if he wasn't in first place, who would dare to proclaim themselves first?

"Good. In second place is Luo Xi, third place Ruohuan, fourth place Fu Xiaochen, fifth place Feng Mosheng, and sixth place Du Hu..."

After announcing the results, Pavilion Master Kang continued, "We'll be moving on to the fourth examination, comprehension of cultivation!"

Chapter 541

Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus

"Only with a deep understanding of cultivation can a master teacher accurately point out and correct the flaws and errors in his student. Otherwise, if theory is all he knows, he won't be able to guide his student correctly!"

"Thus, the cultivation of a master teacher and his ability to see through a person's core is of utmost importance as well! As such, I've discussed with the other elders and we have decided to not follow the usual conventions for this comprehension of cultivation test. Instead, a new battle technique was designed just for this test. Later on, you will be given an incense's time (15 minutes) to learn it, and your result will be judged based on how deep your comprehension of the battle technique is!"

"Don't worry. This battle technique is completely new so there's no need to worry about the test being leaked to any of the candidates beforehand," Pavilion Master Kang explained.

"There's no way the topic could have been leaked beforehand! Master teachers value fairness and equality. If an investigation were to be conducted and one is found to be guilty, one will be stripped of his license! How could anyone possibly do it knowing of such consequences?"

"Even if it's unfair, given that Ruohuan gongzi is the pavilion master's student, the test should be biased to him... But it seems like he is on the verge of crumbling from the consecutive blows!"

"Indeed! Despite being the head of the Four Gentlemen, look at his current state. He looks like a defeated rooster..."

"Right, Pavilion Master Kang, what battle technique will it be? If it's too easy, given the talents of the candidates, they will all surely be able to fully comprehend it within an incense's time. If that happens, how will we evaluate the results?"

Hearing the rules, some of the audience expressed their doubts.

One's mastery of battle techniques could be divided into five main levels: Novice, Initiate, Minor Accomplishment, Major Accomplishment, and Consummation.

Novice meant that one has barely understood the battle technique and was able to forcibly execute it.

At Initiate level, one was able to harness some might in the technique, but one might still be a little restrained in its control.

At Minor Accomplishment, one's understanding of the battle technique had already reached a profound level. It could be utilized as an ace up one's sleeves.

One must know that most fighters had only trained their battle techniques to this point.

Beyond that were Major Accomplishment and Consummation. However, without decades of effort, it was impossible to reach that.

If this battle technique was easy, all of the candidates would definitely be able to reach Minor Accomplishment within an incense's time. Since everyone would be on the same level, it would be hard to determine who had fared better.

"Minor Accomplishment?"

Knowing everyone's worry, Pavilion Master Kang chuckled, "If you were to know who designed this battle technique, you wouldn't be thinking the same anymore!"

"Who designed the battle technique?"

"Could it be... Elder Hong?"

"Elder Hong is the person who has the deepest understanding of battle techniques in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion. In the past fifty years, he has created at least thirty battle techniques!"

"Indeed. The Overlapping Illusory Fist and Rippleless Consecutive Palms originated from him!"

"Three of my battle techniques also came from him..."

"Just that... Hasn't Elder Hong been in seclusion for the last ten years? When did he return?"

"I've no idea too. However, if the battle technique really originates from him, putting aside Minor Accomplishment, even achieving Novice within that short period of time will be difficult!"

...

Hearing the pavilion master's words, the crowd suddenly remembered a legendary figure.

"That's right. The one who created the battle technique is Elder Hong!"

Pavilion Master Kang chuckled as he uncovered the mystery plaguing everyone's mind. "For the past ten years, Elder Hong has been in seclusion to develop this technique, and a few days ago, he finally succeeded in refining it! Given the length of time he spent on it, the complexity of it is imaginable. Based on the combined evaluation of me and the other elders, we've deemed it to have at least reached the top of Spirit intermediate-tier!"

"A battle technique at the top of Spirit intermediate-tier?"

"Impressive!"

Everyone gasped in shock.

Even a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert would find it hard to comprehend a battle technique of this level, let alone the candidates participating in the selection round.

"Alright, I've said all that has to be said. Now, allow me to invite Elder Hong up to explain the rules of the test. He will be assessing the candidates personally!"

Pavilion Master Kang smiled. Looking around the crowd, he suddenly froze, "Ah? Elder Hong, hold it for a moment. You... where are you intending to go?"

Tracing Pavilion Master Kang's gaze, everyone saw an elder who had unknowingly reached the entrance of the hall. He was just a step away from leaving the compound.

"Cough cough. I'm just... walking about!"

Seeing that everyone's attention was on him, the elder hurriedly stopped and his face turned scarlet.

"The fourth test is about to begin..." Pavilion Master Kang hurried over and pulled him back.

"I..." Elder Hong had a very stifled expression on his face. "Pavilion master, why don't you... conduct the test instead?"

He had agreed to conducting the test confidently previously, but after seeing the awful state the previous three elders were in, he hesitated.

That lad was truly sinister. Who knew what kind of peculiarity would happen to him if he were to assess him. He didn't want the reputation he had accrue to collapse because of this single incident.

"How can I? You were the one who developed the battle technique, not to mention, you have already achieved Major Accomplishment in it. Other than you, who else is qualified to assess them?" Pavilion Master Kang said.

This battle technique was developed from Elder Hong, and he had reached Major Accomplishment in it as well. Other than him, no one else was qualified to conduct the test.

At the very least, Pavilion Master Kang didn't think he was.

"Ah..." Elder Hong hesitated.

"Don't worry, it's just an incense's time. Even the most talented genius will only be able to reach Novice in that period of time. There won't be any problem, so rest assure!"

Knowing what Elder Hong was worried about, Pavilion Master Kang attempted to console him via telepathy.

Zhang shi was indeed a disquieting. But battle techniques weren't things that could be mastered in a single breath. He didn't believe that the other party could reach Major Accomplishment in just an incense's time, thus surpassing the creator, Elder Hong.

Thus, there was nothing for Elder Hong to worry about.

"Alright then!"

After a further moment of contemplation, Elder Hong felt that Pavilion Master Kang's words were logical and finally walked up the stage.

"Pavilion Master Kang has briefly introduced the content of the test to you all. I'll now announce the rules for the test!

"The battle technique that I'll be imparting is called 'Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus'. The inspiration behind the technique came from observing the nature of red lotuses. The rules are simple-later on, I'll impart you the formula for the sword art, and you will be given an incense's time to study and comprehend it!

"After which, I'll personally test you on your level of comprehension of the technique. Don't worry, your cultivation will not affect your comprehension of the technique-it's determined solely by your talent. As long as you have reached Transcendent Mortal realm, you will be able to learn and execute it.

"During the assessment, you'll be crossing blows with me. If you wish, we can compete solely on swordsmanship itself. If you can trade three blows with me using the Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus, I'll take it as you have reached Novice mastery. Six swords will be taken as Initiate mastery, and nine swords would mean that you have achieved Small Accomplishment... And if you can trade ten blows with me, you will be considered to have reached Major Accomplishment..."

Elder Hong explained the rules.

In truth, it was a bit similar to the cultivation test in the second round. However, in this test, one could only use the Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus. If one of the competitors used any other technique, they would be deemed to have failed.

An incense's time was roughly fifteen minutes, and in this short period of time, it would be difficult to even finish browsing through the battle technique, let alone, comprehend and utilize it in a real battle.

Compared to the previous three, the difficulty of this test was truly immense.

"To ensure fairness, the examination will be held in another chamber. I'll head in right

now, and you each can enter one by one..."

At which, Elder Hong paused for a moment before continuing, "How about I decide on a sequence for you all to avoid contention. Du Hu will enter first, followed by Luo Xi, Feng Mosheng, Fu Xiaochen, Jun Ruohuan, and finally, Zhang Shi!"

Given the peculiarity of Zhang Xuan, it was best to put him last. Otherwise, if the other party were to run in first, what if he were to lose control of the situation and the test was unable to be carried on like before?

"Alright!"

Everyone nodded in agreement.

"Let's begin then!"

After deciding on the order, Elder Hong took the lead by walking into the room. Du Hu hurriedly followed behind him.

An incense's time later, light flickered on the wall and a number appeared on it... 3!

To think that Du Hu would be able to comprehend to the level of a Novice in such a short period of time.

As expected of a genius nominated by the other elders, he was indeed extraordinary.

After him was Luo Xi.

Along with Du Hu, she was one of the weaker among the six. Knowing that there was no chance for her to be selected, she didn't feel any pressure anymore. After an incense's time, she managed to trade three blows, reaching Novice as well.

After her was Feng Mosheng. As expected of Elder Feng's student, his comprehension of battle techniques had reached an extremely profound level. Luo Xi and Du Hu, having come from less privileged backgrounds, were no match for him. After an incense's time, he actually managed to trade five blows with Elder Hong.

That was almost at the level of an Initiate!

Fu Xiaochen did well too, trading five blows as well.

After those four were done, everyone's eyes gathered on Jun Ruohuan.

He specialized in sword techniques, and not to mention, he was also the most popular contender for this selection round and Pavilion Master Kang's direct disciple. As such, there were high expectations for his result.

Even though he had suffered consecutive blows in the last three rounds, he was still a full-fledged 4-star master teacher. He had already conditioned his state of mind by the time his turn came, and fortunately, he didn't let everyone down. An incense's time later, a massive '6' appeared conspicuously on the screen.

This showed that his comprehension of battle technique was top-notch among his fellow peers.

"To be able to trade six blows with Elder Hong, this means that he has reached a mastery of Initiate within a mere fifteen minutes! If he were given some more time, reaching Minor Accomplishment might not even be a problem for him!"

"He's indeed a genius!"

"I wonder if Zhang shi can break that record!"

"Zhang shi... In my view, the weapon he is the most proficient in is the spear. Given that the Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus is a sword art, he might be in a disadvantageous position!"

"That's true..."

...

Seeing Ruohuan gongzi step out from the room, everyone's eyes gathered on the black horse of the selection round.

Initially, no one thought well of him. However, after triumphing indisputably over the rest in three consecutive tests, no one dared to look down on his capability.

Even so, they couldn't help but feel a little doubtful.

After all, from the first test, it could be seen that the other party was skilled in spear arts. Learning a sword art all of a sudden should be rather tough for him.

Amidst the discussion, Zhang Xuan stepped into the room.

Soon, an incense's time passed.

"Hmm? Why is there no number at all?"

"Indeed! Going by the situation with the others, a number should have appeared by now. Regardless of whether he has reached Novice or Initiate, a result should at least appear?"

"What's happening?"

The time was up, but not only was the result not reflected, the room was also bizarrely quiet. The master teachers in the hall stared at one another in bewilderment.

Going by the precedents of this fellow, even if he were to subdue Elder Hong in a single blow, the crowd wouldn't find it too shocking. But... for there to be no results at all, not to mention, no sign of movements in the chamber... What the heck?

Could it be that Elder Hong... had killed that fellow?

Or perhaps... that fellow had killed Elder Hong?

Really, what is going on?

Chapter 542

Elder Hong's Terror

Seeing the young man walk in, Elder Hong's mouth twitched.

He had witnessed the tragic experiences of the other elders before him, and it had truly left him frightened.

'The Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus is a technique that I devoted ten years of my life to create. Even if Pavilion Master Kang were to cultivate it, he could only reach Initiate within an incense's time. No matter how talented this fellow is, reaching Minor Accomplishment should be an impossibility. There's nothing I should be worried about... '

Elder Hong calmed himself down by consoling him before pointing to the table in front. "The manual for the Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus is there. You have an incense's time starting from now!"

After which, he immediately lit the incense beside him and smoke slowly drifted within the room.

Zhang Xuan walked up to the table, touched the manual, and an identical copy appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

He flipped through the book with his hands, but his consciousness was inside the Library of Heaven's Path

"Nine Swords of Red Lotus, created by Elder Hong Qin. It consists of a total of nine movements. Flaws..."

After reading through the content, a bizarre expression appeared on Zhang Xuan's face.

"So many flaws? And they still dare to call it a profound sword art?"

The sword art before him had actually more than a hundred flaws. With so much flaws,

how could they dare to call it a profound sword art... Even trying to get him to learn it... It was truly a wonder where this fellow got his confidence from.

But thinking about it, Zhang Xuan soon realized that he might be underestimating the difficulty of creating a sword art. Most battle techniques had been passed down through innumerable generations and undergone the refinement of many predecessors, thus reducing the number of flaws in it. Given that this sword art had just been created, it was natural for there to be so many flaws.

"Heaven's Path Sword Art, fuse!"

With a thought, Heaven's Path Sword Art and the many sword art secret manuals that Zhang Xuan had obtained before flew out and fused together with this book.

Hu!

A new Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus appeared. Zhang Xuan hurriedly flipped through it.

Soon, he shook his head.

He had too few books on Spirit intermediate-tier sword arts. The sword arts he had gathered before were too basic to complement such a profound sword art.

Making an analogy, no matter how good a lump of feces was, it could never match the value of gold. That was an innate difference in their nature. No matter how accurate the concepts contained within these basic sword art manuals were, they were still unable to make up for the qualitative difference with the Spirit intermediate-tier sword art.

"There are still more than thirty flaws..."

After fusing the book, Zhang Xuan was in tears.

Ever since his transmigration, he had never cultivated a cultivation technique or battle technique that had flaws. This had made him a perfectionist when it came to those. Even for the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps which had three flaws, he'd had to muster up his courage before cultivating it... Yet, this sword art before him had more than thirty flaws! He really couldn't bring himself to cultivate it!

It was just like how a person whose taste buds is accustomed to the delicacies of a five-star chef couldn't possibly get used to roadside stalls.

But... if he didn't cultivate this technique, he would fail the test.

In a moment, he fell into a dilemma.

...

On the other hand, Elder Hong's face was gradually turning red, and it seemed as though left to be, he would explode soon!

Even though he didn't wish to lose the reputation he had accrue in the earlier part of his life to this fellow, he was still determined to remain professional in this test. Thus, he had been secretly assessing the other party ever since he picked up the book.

And the other party's actions made him tempted to rush forward and tear the other party apart.

He created this Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus by observing the life cycle of a red lotus, and it spent him an entire ten years to master the technique. He was proud to say that this was one of the strongest battle technique available in Myriad Kingdom City, and he knew that it would definitely be passed on from generation to generation for innumerable years to come. Yet, the other party simply flipped through it swiftly as soon as he picked it up. It was clear that the other party didn't have the intention to study it properly at all.

Not only so, his face alternated between a frown and a conflicted expression. What the heck was that?

You look as though you had met with a huge pile of feces and you are about to puke at any moment...

The heck!

Was the technique that I created so repulsive that you would barf?

Infuriated by the other party's reaction, Elder Hong was about to blow up.

He had imagined many possibilities-the other party might perhaps reach

Consummation within an incense's time, or perhaps, refuse to cultivate it altogether... But one thing he had never dreamed of was the other party being on the verge of vomiting upon browsing through the manual...

This is a top-notch technique among Spirit intermediate-tier battle techniques, even Pavilion Master Kang and the other elders were filled with praises for it... What are you trying to say by those reaction?

Just as he was seething with rage, the young man before him shut his eyes tightly and clenched his jaws. With an expression reminiscent of a soldier marching to his death, he said, "Forget it, if I have to die, so be it. At most, I'll just never use this technique after cultivating it!"

"YOU!"

Elder Hong couldn't hold himself back anymore. He dashed up to the other party and bellowed, "Zhang shi, what do you mean by that?"

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was just about to cultivate when the elder suddenly rushed up to him and yelled furiously in his face. Bewildered, Zhang Xuan stared at the other party doubtfully and asked, "What's wrong?"

"Does the sword art I created disgust you so much?" Elder Hong immediately questioned the other party.

"Actually, it's not entirely disgust but that... there was simply too many flaws in them. I don't really want to cultivate it..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"You..." Hearing those words, Elder Hong felt so enraged that he was about to go mad.

If someone were to ask you such a question, no matter how much you hate the other party, in view of the other party's pride, you should at least deny it or compliment him a little...

But this fellow actually just admitted to it straight!

'Not entirely disgust'...In other words, my technique does disgust you!

'Too many flaws'...Too many your head!

Do you know how much effort I put into creating this battle technique? For ten years, I skipped meals and barely rested, all in hopes of creating a mighty technique that would awe the world... Yet, you said that there are too many flaws in my technique...

"May I know what flaws there are in my sword art?"

Harrumphing coldly, Elder Hong suppressed his rage in fear that he might just kill the other party in a moment of rashness.

"You're seeking my guidance? Fine, I'll point them out to you then! Look carefully. I don't have much time, so I'll only say them once."

Placing his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan nodded and strolled around the room slowly, "I'll first talk about the first movement of your nine swords, Blooming of the Scarlet Lotus! This technique consists of a total of eighty-one transformations, and its might is indeed extraordinary. However... to stab one's sword out from one's waist while driving one's zhenqi through the Huangu and Wangchang acupoints is a move that will inhibit one's flow of zhenqi in itself, thus severely limiting one's strength! If, at that moment, I were to use a weapon, say an ordinary stick, to strike your Huihai acupoint, how would you deal with it?"

"Strike my Huihai acupoint?"

Upon hearing those words, the movements involved in the Blooming of the Scarlet Lotus appeared in his mind and he abruptly stiffened.

The blooming of a scarlet lotus was a very beautiful phenomenon.

As though reflecting that, this move was particularly eye-catching. Using this move, one would attack one's opponent through a violent surge of sword qi. Indubitably, it was a powerful move. However, it had a few fatal flaws, and Huihai acupoint was one of them. Putting aside a wooden stick, if one were to just touch it with one's finger, the entire sword art would fall apart. One would find himself incapable of exerting any might at all.

Even he had overlooked this flaw, and yet, the other party noticed it just by flipping through it?

"But so what if you know that my Huihai acupoint is my weakness? A sword art prides itself on its speed. By the time you can react, I would have already released five strikes.

How do you intend to cope with that?" Elder Hong argued.

There was no cultivation technique or sword art that was without flaws. While it is true that the Blooming of the Scarlet Lotus had a fatal flaw, it would be impossible to exploit it under the barrage of attacks.

"Released five strikes? You're wrong. What if, at the very start, I were to move forward three steps to strike your Honghai, turn around to strike your Luoqiao, and take three side steps to strike your Fujiang... After striking these three of your acupoints, do you think you could dodge my attack on your Huihai?" Zhang Xuan said nonchalantly.

"If you were to strike my Honghai, I would twist my sword to block it and retreat a step backward. Then, when you stuck my Luoqiao, I would have to quickly withdraw my offense to defend myself, thus causing a sudden stoppage in my flow of zhenqi, making it impossible for me to launch any sword qi. Then, when you stuck my Fujiang, if I were to attempt to dodge it, my Huihai would surely be unguarded... Y-you..."

Elder Hong analyzed the scenario and initially, he didn't think much of it. However, the more he thought about, the paler his face became, and he started to tremble in shock.

If it were a real battle, if his opponent were to strike at these three points consecutively, his Blooming of the Scarlet Rose would immediately fall apart. Not only would he be unable to hurt the other party, he would even suffer severe damage from the backlash of his zhenqi.

Just by stabbing at three perfectly ordinary locations, his zhenqi would be inhibited and he would suffer severe damage from his own sword art...

This...

"This is only the first move. Your second move, Radiance of the Scarlet Lotus, is filled with innumerable flaws. Against this move, even without a weapon, I can charge straight toward your Zhonggong and strike your Ruohai. You would then be forced to retreat... and the rest would be easy," Zhang Xuan continued.

After learning of the flaws from the Library of Heaven's Path, along with Zhang Xuan's deep knowledge of sword arts, finding a counter for them was quite an easy task.

"I..."

Elder Hong unconsciously took a step back.

The second step, Radiance of the Scarlet Lotus, was a long-ranged attack. It looked powerful, but in truth, it would leave one vulnerable to close-range attacks. As long as an enemy were to charge in at this moment to strike one's Zhonggong and Ruohai, one's zhenqi would definitely be jolted, thus countering the sword art!

In the first move, the enemy would at least still have to stab four locations, but for this, two moves were sufficient to render him completely powerless!

How in the world...

Was the sword art he created really that worthless?

"Wait a moment... Under the assault of my sword qi, how could you have the time to possibly get close to me and make so many moves?"

After contemplating over it for a moment, Elder Hong's eyebrows shot up.

What the other party said was all theory. In a real battle, given how fast his sword art was, how could the other party possibly have the time and opportunity to strike him consecutively?

"No time?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Take a good look then!"

Zhang Xuan's body swayed, leaving behind an afterimage on the spot. In the blink of an eye, he had already traveled to the three locations and tapped on them with his fingers consecutively. The three fingers struck the acupoints that he had spoken of accurately.

"This..."

Upon seeing this move, Elder Hong's body convulsed, and he nearly fell to the floor.

The other party's speed and offense were flawless. If he had really used the sword art previously and the other party launched such a counter... he would surely be defeated utterly in the blink of an eye.

Unless... he abandoned the technique and dealt with the other party through his absolute might. Otherwise, with just swordsmanship alone, he would be defeated

thoroughly, perhaps even suffering grievous wounds in the process.

Cold sweat dripped down his back.

Having created so many battle techniques, this Nine Swords of the Scarlet Lotus was actually the one he prided himself the most on. He thought that this technique would have him unrivaled in the Myriad Kingdom City. He never expected his ten years of hard work... to be so worthless!

"Zhang shi, may I know if... there's a way to complete this sword art of mine?"

Clasping his fist, Elder Hong bowed deeply-a bow that only a student would make to his teacher.

Chapter 543

Forfeit

While the duo was discussing sword art, everyone outside was panicking.

"Pavilion Master Kang, Zhang shi has already been inside for two hours now. Do you think it is possible that... Elder Hong killed him due to a moment of rage?" Su shi asked anxiously.

It had been two hours since Zhang Xuan entered the chamber, but not only was there no result, there didn't seem to be any movement within as well. No one knew what was going on inside, and a tense atmosphere seemed to fill the room.

"There's no need to worry. Even if they were to quarrel, as long as one side makes a move, the number of blows should appear on the screen... Given that no number has appeared yet, it could only mean that they haven't come to blows yet..." While consoling Su shi, Pavilion Master Kang also frowned in confusion.

Even if Zhang Xuan were to fool about, Elder Hong should possess some self-restraint! After all, how could a person who has already lived for a century possibly lay his hands on a junior in front of so many master teachers?

Besides, as long as one side made a move, a number would surely appear on the screen. Currently, there was no movement whatsoever, as though the duo had fallen into a deep sleep inside the chamber. What was going on?

"Pavilion master, why don't you... go in to take a look?" Ling shi turned to look at him and asked.

It wasn't a solution to be waiting out here for them. If the pavilion master were to take a look, they would at least know what was going on inside.

"Alright!" After a moment of hesitation, Pavilion Master Kang thought that it was reasonable and nodded his head. "You all remain here, I'll go in alone. This way, it'll be easier for me to deal with anything that occurs!"

Su shi and Ling shi nodded their heads. Pavilion Master Kang took in a deep breath, and just as he was about to push the door open and enter, 'jiya!', the door opened, and Zhang Xuan and Elder Hong walked out side by side.

The attire of the both were still tidy and the both of them had a smile on their faces. There didn't seem to be the slightest hostility between them.

Dumbfounded, everyone stared at one another blankly.

In the end, after an entire two hours, the two of you didn't fight at all! If you two aren't going to fight, why don't you all just come out? Aren't you two just wasting our time?

Elder Wu, Elder Bai, and Elder Yun also stared at one another in bewilderment.

Given their experience, they felt that even if the both of them didn't fight, Elder Hong would still be left in an unseemly state. They had never expected the both of them to leave from chamber together with a bright smile on their face.

Did Zhang shi accidentally knock his head on something?

After leaving them in such a tragic state, he actually spared Elder Hong... The trio felt a little doubtful at this situation.

"Elder Hong, this..." Pavilion Master Kang started to ask with a doubtful expression.

"Oh, it's nothing!"

Elder Hong shook his head. He turned to glance at the young man before him, and even until now, the shock and admiration he felt for the latter hadn't faded yet.

He thought that deciphering the flaws of two of his moves would be the limit of this fellow, but after a comprehensive discussion did he realize that the other party's comprehension of cultivation had already reached an unbelievable level. Just a casual pointer from him could induce a qualitative leap in one's strength. The Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus which he had prided himself on turned out to be full of flaws!

It was a decent technique against ordinary cultivators of his level, but against true experts, it would surely crumble swiftly!

If he were to use this technique to challenge others, he would probably die from the

backlash of his own sword art before injuring his opponent.

To die from the backlash of a battle technique he created himself... If word were to spread out, he would become a laughingstock for innumerable years to come. His reputation that he had built up for himself with great difficulty would fall apart immediately.

Knowing this, Elder Hong humbly sought the other party's guidance for two hours, and under the other party's pointers, his comprehension of the sword art improved greatly. If he were given some more time, he was confident he could create an even more perfect and powerful ultimate technique.

"Nothing? Then... what is the result of the selection round?"

Seeing that the other party wasn't willing to speak any further, Pavilion Master Kang could only turn the topic back to the selection round.

"I'll announce the results now!"

Nodding his head, Elder Hong smiled, "These are the results of all of the candidates after my assessment. Luo Xi and Du Hu, having dealt three blows, are in fifth place; Feng Mosheng and Fu Xiaochen, having dealt five blows, are in third place; Jun Ruohuan, having dealt six blows, is in second place. And in first place is... Zhang shi!"

"Zhang shi is in first place?"

"He's in first place again? I thought that they didn't even exchange blows."

Hearing this conclusion, everyone was taken aback.

The results of Jun Ruohuan and the other candidates were clear to the eye of everyone here. On the other hand, not a single number appeared in the midst of Zhang shi's test. How did he end up being placed first?

"I can't accept this!"

Ruohuan gongzi stepped forward. If the other party had shown a result far above his, he would have conceded. But there was clearly no result at all! To declare the other party to be in first place without even competing at all, wasn't this a breach of fairness?

It was just like he had scored 99 marks in an exam. If his rival had scored 100 marks, he would have conceded defeat. But... the other party didn't even take the test at all! On what rights should he be placed first?

"You cannot accept it?" Elder Hong frowned.

"That's right! I managed to comprehend the Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus to Initiate mastery and traded six blows with Elder... I would like to ask that given that elder has assessed him as the first place, how far has he reached in the comprehension of Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus? Has he reached Minor Accomplishment?"

At this point, Ruohuan gongzi looked at the young man in the distance and gritted his teeth. "I refuse to believe that you are able to reach Minor Accomplishment in that battle technique within an incense's time... Unless you fight with me now and defeat me with your sword art!"

"Defeat you?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Forget it, I don't have an interest in bullying others!"

"The heck!"

"Isn't he being too arrogant?"

Hearing those words, the crowd stared at one another.

No matter what, Ruohuan gongzi was a 4-star master teacher, a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan expert. Not to mention, he specialized in swordsmanship as well. Yet, the other party actually said that... he didn't want to bully him!

As a fellow who specialized in wielding spears, aren't you afraid that your teeth might fall off from all that bragging?

"You..." Ruohuan gongzi's face reddened in anger. "If you don't wish to compete with me, so be it. As long as you declare that you have comprehended the Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus to Minor Accomplishment within an incense's time, I'll admit defeat immediately!"

Master teachers valued trust and honor a lot. If the other party were to lie in front of such a huge crowd, his reputation would definitely drop to the gutters.

"Minor Accomplishment..."

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "I didn't even learn a single move from the Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus so how could I have possibly reached Minor Accomplishment?"

"You didn't learn a single move?"

Not only was Ruohuan gongzi stunned, the crowd was also dumbfounded.

Didn't even learn a single move? Then on what ground was he declared to be in first place on?

Wasn't this bias a little too extreme and obvious?!

Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and the others were completely bewildered as well.

They had known Elder Hong for so many years so they knew very well how upright of a person he was. It was impossible for him to take sides for such a matter. But... since Zhang shi didn't learn the technique at all, what right did he have to be in first place?

This was a test that affected one's candidacy for the Master Teacher Tournament! Wasn't this making the matter too lightly?

"Could it be that... Elder Hong has accepted Zhang shi as his student? In order to allow the other party to join the tournament, he intentionally went easy on the latter?"

"But Elder Hong isn't such a person!"

"But if that isn't the case, why did the both of them remain in the room for more than two hours, and despite the fact that Zhang shi hasn't even learned a single movement, he was declared first place?"

The crowd fell into an uproar.

Zhang shi and Elder Hong initially didn't know one another, but everyone saw the smile on their faces as they left the chamber side by side. No one would believe it if they were to claim that there was nothing between them.

Pavilion Master Kang turned to Elder Hong and asked, "Elder Hong, what's going on?"

All gazes also gathered on Elder Hong, curious to see how he would reply.

"Accept him as my student?"

Hearing everyone's conjecture, Elder Hong's lips twitched.

All of your imaginations sure are wild!

Even if I want to accept him as my student... I need to have the capability to back that up first!

Shaking his head, Elder Hong came clean with everyone. "There's no need for you all to guess any further. I'm the one who wants to acknowledge Zhang shi as my teacher, but he won't agree to it!"

"Acknowledge Zhang shi... as your teacher? And he didn't agree to it?"

"Elder Hong, are you pulling our legs?"

Everyone's mouth was widened large, and a bizarre silence loomed in the hall.

Elder Hong was known to be the number one specialist in terms of battle techniques and cultivation techniques in Myriad Kingdom City. He had created innumerable ultimate techniques that many master teachers cultivate. In fact, it could be said that... at least half of the master teachers at the hall now could be considered as half a student of his.

Yet, such an influential figure actually wished to acknowledge that fellow as his teacher?

If that was the case, then wasn't a half of the people in this hall that fellow's grandstudent?

And... what that shocked them more was that... this fellow actually rejected it...

Are you serious?

"Zhang shi possesses outstanding talent, and his comprehension of cultivation has reached an astounding level that one can do nothing but simply look up to. Even though he didn't learn the Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus that I created... his

understanding of it is so deep that I can't even hope to match up to him. I've sought his guidance for the past two hours and benefited greatly from his teachings!" Elder Hong replied gravely.

"Sought Zhang shi's guidance?"

Everyone stared at one another, and for a moment, their brains were unable to process what was going on.

Didn't you spend ten years creating the Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus and even reached Major Accomplishment in it? Yet, toward a fellow who only learned it for an incense's time, you sought the other party's guidance... and even benefited greatly from it, wanting to take him as your teacher...

Why does it sound like a huge joke?

Elder Wu, Elder Bai, and the others widened their eyes in shock.

Initially, when they saw the two coming out with smiles, they thought that Zhang Xuan had changed his nature. But from the looks of it now, they were being too naive. It was not that he didn't do anything, but he had captured Elder Hong's heart!

At least they were only injured. On the other hand, Elder Hong... If he were to really acknowledge Zhang shi as his teacher, his reputation and standing would vanish in an instant.

"This test assesses your comprehension of cultivation. Within an incense's time, Ruohuan gongzi managed to trade six blows with me... On the other hand, in the same time period, Zhang shi was able to offer me valuable guidance... Even if he didn't learn the Nine Swords of Scarlet Lotus, my judgement of putting him in first place shouldn't be a problem at all, right?"

Elder Hong stared at Jun Ruohuan coldly.

"This..."

Ruohuan gongzi's body twitched, and he felt like he would cry at any moment now.

Given Elder Hong's standing, he wouldn't stoop down to the level of lying... In other words, there was a very good chance that what the other party was saying was the

truth. He was gleeful at having reached Initiate mastery, thinking that he was a great genius. On the other hand, the other party had managed to understand the technique thoroughly and even became a teacher for the creator of the battle technique...

The heck!

Where did this monster pop out from?

Could that monster still be considered as a human like that?

It was no wonder the other party said that he didn't want to bully him... For him, who he could only withstand six blows from Elder Hong, to go up against someone who could become a teacher for Elder Hong... that would indeed be a terribly one-sided match!

"Since the results are out, let's proceed on to the next test then!"

Seeing that his student was on the verge of going insane from the mental blows he was suffering, Pavilion Master Kang hurriedly interjected and changed the topic.

"This is the last test for the selection round. It'll be on pointing out flaws in others' cultivation process and offering pointers for improvement..."

But halfway through Pavilion Master Kang's words, a voice suddenly echoed. Turning around, he saw Zhang Xuan looking at him.

"I'll forfeit this round!"

Chapter 544

Insufficient Supporting Occupations?

"Forfeit?"

Everyone turned to look at Zhang Xuan.

As the person who had managed to take first place in the first four rounds, he was truly the black horse of the selection round. Why did he suddenly forfeit at the last moment?

"You've already participated in the first four tests, this is the last one..." Su shi hurriedly advised him anxiously.

"The purpose of this selection round is to pick out two candidates with the best results to participate in the Master Teacher Tournament. Given my previous results, even if I don't participate in the fifth round, I'll still be in first place. Since there's no reason for me to continue on, I might as well forfeit," Zhang Xuan said impassively. "Besides... there's not much point in me getting the first place all the time."

"Not much point in getting the first place all the time?"

"It must be exhilarating to say those words!"

"But what Zhang shi said makes sense. Having taken first place in the previous four rounds, he has 24 points at present. On the other hand, the current second place, Ruohuan gongzi, only has 18 points. After which is Fu Xiaochen with 15 points, Feng Mosheng with 13 points, Luo Xu with 10 and Du Hu with 7. Even if Zhang shi were to forfeit this round and end up in the last place, he would still have 25 points. There is no one who can catch up to him already... So, it shouldn't be a problem for him to forfeit at this point!"

"To be able to be the overall champion despite skipping the final round... Incredible!"

...

Hearing the explanation, everyone understood his reasoning.

Since his position was already stable, there was indeed no need for him to waste time on the last test.

"This..." Coming to a realization, Pavilion Master Kang traded glances with Su shi and smiled bitterly.

As expected of Zhang shi, he sure was imposing.

Other people had to give their all for every single test whereas this fellow's victory was already decided in the fourth round.

Men are indeed not born equal.

"Since that's the case, then so be it!"

Sweeping past the other candidates with his gaze, Pavilion Master Kang saw that they were reluctant to compete with such a monster as well. Thus, he shook his head and continued, "However, Zhang shi, you should remain in the hall for now. After the last test, we'll explain the details regarding the Master Teacher Tournament to you!"

"Un!" Zhang Xaun nodded his head.

It didn't take long for the results of the round to emerge. Ruohuan gongzi managed to clinch first place in the last round, thus winning the other slot for the Master Teacher Tournament.

"Alright. Now that the selection round is over, I'll officially declare that Zhang shi and Jun Ruohuan shall represent the Myriad Kingdom Alliance to participate in the Master Teacher Tournament..."

Since the results were clear, Pavilion Master Kang began declaring the final verdict.

"Pavilion master, hold on for a moment!"

But halfway through his words, Fu Xiaochen stepped forward, "I don't deny Zhang shi's capability. However... If my memory doesn't fail me, the minimum requirement for participating in the Master Teacher Tournament is to be a 3-star master teacher. Given that Zhang shi is only a 2-star master teacher, I fear that he won't even pass the

qualification check if he were to participate in the tournament.

Pavilion Master Kang frowned.

The other party was right. There was indeed a prerequisite for one's master teacher rank to participate in the Master Teacher Tournament.

And 3-star was the minimum requirement.

If one couldn't even reach such a level, how could he possibly triumph over the others in the tournament?

Even though Zhang Xuan had displayed an outstanding performance in the selection round, in the end, he was only a 2-star master teacher. He was still a way off from meeting the minimum participation requirement.

"Given how Zhang shi passed all of the tests so easily, it wouldn't be a problem even if he were to apply for the rank of a 4-star master teacher straight away!" Su shi interjected.

Even Ruohuan gongzi, a 4-star master teacher, wasn't a match for Zhang shi at all. There should be no difficulty for the latter to apply for a 4-star master teacher rank at all.

"Zhang shi's capability is indeed on par with 4-star master teachers. Even without undergoing a 4-star master teacher examination, it wouldn't be a problem for his promotion application to pass straight. However... the requirements to becoming a 4-star master teacher dictates that one has to have at least four 4-star supporting occupations! I'm afraid that... with such a requirement, he isn't qualified as a 4-star master teacher," Fu Xiaochen said.

If Zhang shi hadn't appeared, he and Ruohuan gongzi would definitely have been the candidates for the tournament. Given that his slot was being snatched away from him, he had to at least do something to vie it back.

And the other party's supporting occupations was a huge flaw he could pick at!

In his view, no matter how skilled Zhang shi was, given his age, there should be a limit to what he was capable of. After all, he couldn't possibly be skilled in everything!

"That's true..."

"Supporting occupations also require a long duration of studying to accrue knowledge and advance..."

Everyone fell silent. Even Su shi was unable to say a single word about it.

That was true.

Zhang shi's talent and capability was clear to everyone's eyes, there was nothing that could dispute it... But to become a 4-star master teacher was far more difficult than that. Supporting occupations were of vital importance as well.

Even a 3-star master teacher would require three 3-star supporting occupation. Just like with Soul Depth, this was a fundamental requirement.

"Zhang shi's proficiency regarding painting has definitely reached a minimum of 4-star. It won't be a problem for me to apply the rank for him at the Painter Guild!"

Elder Yun stepped forward.

Given how the other party was able to easily produce a sixth level painting, his proficiency in painting was definitely higher than him. Applying for the position of a 4-star painter wasn't a problem at all.

"But that's only one occupation!" Fu Xiaochen said.

Even if he were to be assessed as a 4-star painter, that would only make one occupation. He was still lacking in two.

By no means was it easy to pick up a supporting occupation, not to mention, they had to reach 3-star for him to qualify for the 3-star master teacher rank.

"Zhang shi, do you have any occupations that have reached a minimum of 3-star?" Pavilion Master Kang asked.

"I..." Zhang Xuan was just about to speak when an apprentice suddenly barged in.

"Pavilion master! Hall Master Han from the Beast Hall requests to enter!"

"Hall Master Han? What is here for?" Pavilion Master Kang was taken aback.

The head of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Beast Hall, Han Chong, wasn't really on close terms with him. Why would he suddenly visit the Master Teacher Pavilion?

"Invite him in!" Even though he was doubtful, he chose to invite the other party in for the time being.

Although the Master Teacher Pavilion wielded greater authority than the Beast Hall, the might of the Beast Hall wasn't to be underestimated. In any case, even if he didn't intend to maintain friendly relations with the other party, it would still be wise to avoid making such an enemy.

"Yes!" The apprentice departed, and a moment later, two elders entered the room. Turning his head around, Zhang Xuan saw two people entering. One of them was Hall Master Han whom he met at Coax Ridge while the other one was Hall Master Sai from the Appraiser Hall.

"Greetings to Pavilion Master Kang and the elders of Master Teacher Pavilion!"

They were surprised to see that there were so many people in the hall. However, as influential people themselves, they had braved through many storms, so they managed to maintain their grace as they clasped their fists in greeting.

After trading a few pleasantries, Hall Master Kang asked doubtfully, "May I know the reason behind Hall Master Han and Hall Master Sai's visit?"

"In truth, I've come here to look for Zhang shi!" Hall Master Han chuckled. "I heard from Hall Master Sai that he was heading here so I rushed all the way here!"

"Zhang shi?" Pavilion Master Kang blinked in surprise. The others also turned their gazes over.

"Is there a reason why you're looking for me?" Zhang Xuan was also perplexed by the situation before him.

He had only met the other party once and there wasn't too deep of a relationship between them. Why would the other party come to find him?

"Oh, it's actually like that. I've reported Zhang shi's feat of taming the Demon Cinque

Beast to the headquarters and they decided to make an exception to promote Zhang shi as a 4-star beast tamer. Thus, I've come here to deliver your emblem to you!" Hall Master Han smiled.

Judging by how Zhang shi was able to tame the Demon Cinque Beast with just a single word, his capability in beast taming had already far surpassed him. As such, he informed the headquarters of the matter as soon as he returned.

After receiving the reply earlier today, he immediately rushed over to look for Zhang shi.

Under normal circumstances, beast tamer, as an occupation of the Upper Nine Paths, had strict requirements of one's cultivation. To reach 4-star, one's cultivation had to reach Transcendent Mortal 2-dan at minimum. This was truly a rare exception.

"4-star beast tamer?"

"Zhang shi is actually a 4-star beast tamer?"

Hearing Hall Master Han's words, everyone broke into an uproar.

It was right after someone remarked that Zhang shi was lacking in supporting occupations when the other party had a 4-star beast tamer emblem delivered to him.

Along with the painter occupation, he had two occupations down already.

"Thank you..."

Not expecting the other party to request for a 4-star beast tamer emblem for him, Zhang Xuan nodded his head. Right when he received the emblem, the same apprentice from before rushed in and reported, "Hall master, Guild Leader Zheng and Guild Leader Meng from Honghai City's Formation Guild and Physician Guild... request to enter!"

"Invite them in!"

Pavilion Master Kang waved his hands.

Soon, the duo appeared in the hall.

Formation master and physician were another two of the most prestigious occupations of the Upper Nine Paths that were inferior in no way to beast tamer. The simultaneous arrival of the two guild leaders had left all of the other master teachers staring at one another in bewilderment.

"May I know why the two of you are here?" Pavilion Master Kang clasped his fist and asked doubtfully.

"I'm here to look for Zhang shi!" Guild Leader Zheng said.

"You're here to look for Zhang shi as well?" Pavilion Master Kang widened his eyes in shock.

"That's right!" Guild Leader Zheng chuckled. Turning to Zhang Xuan, he said, "Zhang shi, I've only given you a quasi 4-star formation master emblem previously. After you left, I reported this matter to the headquarters and they decided to make an exception to approve you as a 4-star formation master!"

That day, Zhang Xuan had used a sword, saber, and spear to inscribe a grade-5 formation plate. It was only due to his lacking cultivation that he didn't qualify as a true 4-star formation master. As such, he was given a quasi 4-star formation master emblem instead. After the matter, Guild Leader Zheng reported the matter to the headquarter and just a few days before, he received the reply from the headquarter-they had decided to make an exception to promote Zhang Xuan as an official 4-star formation master.

"A 4-star formation master as well?"

Everyone blinked their eyes in disbelief.

Another occupation now?

But before they could recover from their shock, the elder standing beside Guild Leader Zheng clasped his fist and smiled.

"Zhang shi might not recognize me. I am Guild Leader Meng Qi from the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Physician Guild!"

"My greetings to Guild Leader Meng!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Zhang shi challenged Tianwu Kingdom's Wall of Dilemma and solved the second princess's Innate Muscle Deficiency affliction. Hall Master Han was also treated by you a while ago... Your mastery in medicine is indeed miraculous. As such, I also made a request to the headquarters and received their approval. Here is your 4-star physician emblem!"

Guild Master Meng chuckled.

Back then, the Myriad Kingdom Alliance had made Zhang Xuan an elder of their guild for having solved the Wall of Dilemma. But it was only today that they finally met the person in question.

He was indeed young and valiant. There was an extraordinary aura shrouding him.

"That makes four occupations..."

Hearing Guild Leader Meng's words, everyone swallowed a mouthful of saliva.

This was especially so for Fu Xiaochen. He nearly knocked his head on a wall to kill himself.

He had just said that the other party was lacking in supporting occupation when Hall Master Han, Guild Leader Zheng, and Guild Leader Meng walked in personally to deliver his 4-star emblems themselves. Did it need to be so exaggerated?

Even if you wanted to slap my face, surely you don't have to do it so quickly...

Tears streamed down Fu Xiaochen's face. If only he'd known that the other party was so capable, he would have kept his mouth shut.

Just as he was about to suffer a mental breakdown from all those blows, Hall Master Sai's voice sounded, "Upper Nine Paths occupations sure are troublesome. You all still need to go through so much trouble-request from the headquarter and waiting for a reply-before a ranking can be decided. Look at our Appraiser Hall, we gave Zhang shi his 5-star appraiser emblem immediately after he passed the examination, there's no need to go through so much fuss at all!"

"He's a 5-star appraiser on top of that?"

Putong!

Fu Xiaochen really collapsed onto the floor this time around.

Chapter 545

Yin-Yang Lake

"Occupations of the Upper Nine Paths are strict on their rankings, and those that they are willing to make an exception for are all, without a doubt, top-notch geniuses. I thought that Zhang Shi's capability as a master teacher was already impressive... but to think that he was equally amazing in other occupations as well!"

"Indeed! Three of the top Upper Nine Paths occupation actually made an exception and promoted him to 4-star... His talent is no longer something that can be summarized with just 'genius' anymore!"

"That's too formidable..."

Everyone in the room was stunned.

If one were to achieve proficiency far beyond ordinary men in an occupation, one could already be considered as a genius. But the person before them, not only was he young, he actually managed to achieve such astounding proficiency in five occupations... Truly, it was a wonder how he studied so much.

The crowd couldn't help but feel despair when comparing their achievement to the young man before them.

"Since the other occupations have made an exception, why can't our Master Teacher Pavilion? Zhang Shi's performance should make him more than qualified as a 4-star master teacher!"

Su Shi couldn't help but say.

"Indeed!" Ling Shi agreed. "Given that Zhang Shi already had more than five 4-star occupations, even though his cultivation is lacking, I believe that he is still more than qualified as a 4-star master teacher!"

Not only must a 4-star master teacher possess four 4-star supporting occupation, more importantly, one had to possess the cultivation of a Transcendent Mortal 2-dan.

Even though Zhang Shi's cultivation was lacking at the moment, given how the other Upper Nine Paths occupations were willing to make an exception to grant him a 4-star emblem, how couldn't the respected Master Teacher Pavilion do so as well?

"This..." Pavilion Master Kang hesitated.

Indeed! Since the other occupations were willing to go to such extents, why couldn't the Master Teacher Pavilion do so as well?

After a momentary pause, Pavilion Master Kang said, "Alright, I'll send a request to the headquarters immediately..."

Before Pavilion Master Kang could finish his words, Zhang Xuan abruptly asked, "Hold on a moment. The reason why you can't give me a 4-star master teacher emblem straight despite the supporting occupations I have, is it due to my cultivation?"

"Un!" Pavilion Master Kang nodded.

"There's no need to go through so much trouble for that. I'll just make a breakthrough on the spot!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Make a breakthrough on the spot? Cough cough..."

Su Shi and Ling Shi were dumbfounded.

Even if you were at Transcendent Mortal 1-dan Prolonged Longevity realm pinnacle, it shouldn't be that easy for you to make a breakthrough. After all, to achieve a breakthrough, you have to convert the zhenqi in your body into Origin Energy to harmonize better with the environment.

"Zhang Shi, there's no need to rush. You must be careful when making a breakthrough into Origin Energy realm so as to not affect the quality of your Origin Energy. A higher quality Origin Energy will prove to be beneficial to your future cultivation. It would be best if you can accumulate some more experience first.

Pavilion Master Kang advised. However, before he could finish his words, the young man before him suddenly frowned.

Hong long!

A sound reminiscent of an egg cracking sounded from his body. In an instant, the bottleneck which had restrained him suddenly gave way, and a majestic aura gradually emerged from within.

"Origin Energy realm..."

Pavilion Master Kang's body trembled as he swallowed his words.

He could clearly feel that the other party had managed to achieve a breakthrough...

Others would need to find a quiet and safe place to condition their state before attempting a breakthrough... Yet, this fellow simply did it right after saying he would do so... Do you need to be so savage?

After successfully making a breakthrough, Zhang Xuan said nonchalantly, "Alright, there's no need to feel conflicted about it anymore. Since I'm already an Origin Energy realm cultivator, I've already met the conditions!"

He was already ready to make a breakthrough to the next realm by the time he was at the soul oracle tomb. Back at Pavilion Master Kang's room, he had gathered sufficient Transcendent Mortal 2-dan cultivation technique manuals for him to compile the correct Heaven's Path Divine Art. Under such circumstances, achieving a breakthrough hinged on just a single thought.

"Alright..."

Seeing that the other party achieved a breakthrough so easily without any hiccups, the entire hall fell silent.

Fu Xiaochen trembled violently, unable to utter a single word.

Right after he'd doubted the other party's supporting occupation, heads of the Upper Nine Paths guilds rushed into the hall to present him his emblem. And after which, when he doubted the other party's cultivation... the other party immediately achieved a breakthrough for him...

It was truly impossible to speak to someone like that. Otherwise, he would slap your face once every few minutes, and not to mention, it was the type that would leave you tongue-tied and stifled.

When everything else was done, the remaining portion was simple. Not too long later, an emblem representing Zhang Xuan's identity was presented to him.

The current him was an official 4-star master teacher recognized by the Master Teacher Pavilion.

"Zhang shi and Ruohuan, follow me. I'll tell you two the details of the Master Teacher Tournament!"

When all was done, Pavilion Master Kang beckoned them over.

Leaving the hall, the trio entered a room.

"I believe you all should more or less know some details regarding the Master Teacher Tournament!" Pavilion Master Kang said.

"Un!" The duo nodded their heads.

"The Master Teacher Tournament is an event supported by the Huanyu Empire Master Teacher Pavilion. The content of the tournament changes each time, and if one were to get into the top ten, not only would one earn middle-tier spirit stones as a reward, one will even be given an opportunity to study at 'Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy'," Pavilion Master Kang said.

"Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?" Jun Ruohuan's breathing hastened.

"Un!" Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head.

Seeing the agitation on the expression of the other two, Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

"Is that academy famous?"

"Famous?"

Pavilion Master Kang shook his head with a bitter smile. "Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy is established in joint by Hongyuan Empire and the hundred or so Tier 2 Empire Master Teacher Pavilions under them. It's a cradle for 4-star master teachers, and its purpose is to accept and groom talented master teachers. 6-star master teachers conduct lessons personally there to answer their queries. If only I could study in there, I would have long become a 5-star master teacher already!"

"A place to groom talented master teachers?" Zhang Xuan was astounded.

His alternate identity, Yang Xuan, was mistaken by others as a 6-star master teacher. In truth, he had never seen a master teacher of that tier before.

But even so, he knew how fearsome a person who had reached such level would be.

If one were to receive the guidance from such a person, one's cultivation and fighting prowess would surely rise by leaps and bounds.

Putting everything aside, Mo Hunsheng who was trapped in the lotus was just a 6-star soul oracle, but he already possessed such incredible means, so one could only imagine the strength of a master teacher at that level.

"Originally, I only hoped for our Master Teacher Pavilion to not rank in the bottom few. However, with Zhang Shi on our side this time, I hope that... you can try to vie for the top ten!" Pavilion Master Kang said with a serious expression.

Zhang Xuan's performance today had awed him. His expectations couldn't help but rise, and a ray of hope emerged within him... It no longer seemed like a dream for the Myriad Kingdom Alliance to get into the top ten!

If they were to really get into top ten, then as the pavilion master then, his name would go down into history. Perhaps, he might even get the opportunity to be dispatched to the Huanyu Empire Master Teacher Pavilion, thus receiving even better cultivation resources to reach higher realms.

"Top ten?"

Ruohuan gongzi clenched his fists tightly together.

"However, top ten won't be easy at all. Even though the other powers participating in the Master Teacher Tournament have already arrived in the city, they have done well concealing the identity of their participants. Thus, even I haven't managed to gather too much information!"

Even so, Pavilion Master Kang knew the immense difficulty in doing so. "Based on the records in the previous tournaments, one's cultivation will be tested in the tournament as well. It is nearly impossible to get into the top ten without reaching a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan intermediate-stage."

"Transcendent Mortal 4-dan intermediate stage?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"Indeed. This is why I hope that you can use the next two months to work hard on your cultivation!"

Pavilion Master Kang looked at the duo with glowing eyes. "As such, I've decided to bring you two to the Yin-Yang Lake to cultivate tomorrow!"

"Yin-Yang Lake? Teacher, do you mean the Yin-Yang Lake of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain?"

Ruohuan gongzi hurriedly turned to look at his teacher.

"That's right! Where else can one find the Yin-Yang Lake other than in the Origin Flame Glacier Plain?" Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head.

"But... Isn't the Origin Flame Glacier Plain on bad terms with our Myriad Kingdom City? Would they really allow us to use your Yin-Yang Lake?" Ruohuan gongzi asked doubtfully.

"There's no need to worry about that. I've already negotiated the matter with their old ancestor, and as long as you can pass their selection test, you will be allowed to cultivate in the Yin-Yang Lake! The Yin-Yang Lake harnesses the two attributes of yin and yang. On one end is bone-piercing chill whereas on the other end is searing heat. One will be able to control the energy in one's body by cultivating in it. This makes it easier for one to comprehend higher realms, thus hastening one's rate of cultivation. This is exceptionally useful for those who possess unique constitutions like Pure Yin and Pure Yang Body," Pavilion Master Kang said.

"Pure Yin and Pure Yang Body..." Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"Indeed. The Yin-Yang Lake is divided into yin and yang. It has the effect of stimulating and thus, awakening the constitution of those possessing a Pure Yin or Pure Yang Body, inducing a huge rise in their cultivation. However... it is a pity that those who possess these two constitutions are truly rare," Pavilion Master Kang lamented.

"This..." Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Pure Yin and Pure Yang Bodies are indeed rare, but... Zhao Ya's happened to be the former!

Despite only awakening her unique constitution by twenty percent, she already possessed such formidable might. Since this Yin-Yang Lake was useful to her, perhaps he could bring her along to vie for an opportunity for her?

Otherwise, if it came down to it, Zhang Xuan was willing to give up his own slot for the latter as well... Honestly speaking, Zhang Xuan didn't really think the Yin-Yang Lake would make much of a difference to him. After all, as long as he was able to form the Heaven's Path Divine Art and had sufficient spirit stones in his possession, cultivation was as simple as eating and drinking to him. Putting aside Transcendent Mortal 4-dan, as long as he had sufficient quantities of the two, reaching Transcendent Mortal 9-dan in a day wasn't a problem at all!

"However, the Yin-Yang Lake is located at the utmost south of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. It's a long distance away, and even riding on a 4-dan pinnacle aerial spirit beast, just the journey there in itself would take almost a dozen days. If we were to factor in the time required for you to cultivate, the entire trip would take at least forty days. As such, if you don't have any issue, we'll set off tomorrow morning. After all, we have to make it back here before the Master Teacher Tournament," Pavilion Master Kang said with a grim expression.

"No problem!" Zhang Xuan and Ruohuan gongzi nodded their heads.

After hearing the mystical effects of the Yin-Yang Lake, Zhang Xuan was actually rather curious to see it for himself. Also, since it was extremely useful to awakening Zhao Ya's unique constitution, as long as he could vie for an opportunity for her to enter the Yin-Yang Lake, her cultivation might soar by leaps and bounds.

"Alright then. The two of you should return for now to make preparations. We'll meet here tomorrow morning!"

After Pavilion Master Kang was done with the briefing, he dismissed the two.

"Alright!" The duo nodded their heads.

Leaving the room, Zhang Xuan immediately returned back to his residence and called Zhao Ya over.

"Tomorrow, I'll take you to a place that would be useful in awakening your constitution so prepare yourself!"

After which, Zhang Xuan returned to his room. Given that the trip would take more than a month, the urgent matter at hand for him was to raise his cultivation as soon as possible. For the time being, he should at least try to reach Origin Energy realm pinnacle first!

Thus, activating the Spirit Gathering Formation, he sat down. Flicking his wrist, a middle-tier spirit stone appeared before him.

Chapter 546

Elder Hu

Gu gu gu gu!

Pure zhenqi seeped through Zhang Xuan's entire body along his meridians, through his acupoints, headed straight toward his dantian. Driving the Transcendent Mortal 2-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art, Zhang Xuan fell into a tranquil state, and his aura slowly hiked up.

Origin Energy realm primary stage!

Origin Energy realm intermediate stage!

...

If someone else were to see his pace of cultivation, they would immediately fall into a frenzy.

They had spent innumerable years of hard work just to raise their cultivation, but Zhang Xuan seemed to do the same as easily as eating and drinking. The concept of 'difficult' and 'bottleneck' didn't seem to apply to him at all.

...

In a luxurious mansion in the Myriad Kingdom City, a young man stood at the entrance of the courtyard, loitering around anxiously.

If Zhang Xuan was here, he would definitely be able to recognize the other party as the wealthy customer who often bought from him, Song Chao.

After loitering to and fro for several times, Song Chao couldn't help but turn to the guard at the entrance and ask, "When will elder come out of his seclusion?"

"I've no idea as well! After meeting with Song shi the previous time, elder immediately went into seclusion. Since then, he hasn't come out at all!" the guard replied.

"Alright..."

After obtaining the grade-7 Metal Coffin, Song Chao immediately rushed to this courtyard to look for the elder, only to learn that the latter was currently in seclusion. Thus, he could only wait for the latter to return. Who knew that this wait would have taken him several days.

In any case, he did expect the elder to immerse himself in the research of the Soulless Metal Humanoid after obtaining it.

"Forget it, I'll return for now first!"

Since the other party was in seclusion, it wasn't good for him to simply barge in. Helpless, he decided to leave for now. However, before he barely took a few steps, 'jiya!', the door behind him opened.

"Haha!"

Turning around, Song Chao saw an old man walking out of the room with a bright smile.

He hurried forward and bowed to the latter with clasped fists.

"Paying respects to Elder Hu!"

Stroking his beard, Elder Hu said with a smile, "You came at the right time! The Soulless Metal Humanoid you gave me is indeed not bad. After studying for numerous days, I've benefited greatly from it! If I can reach Consonant Spirit realm because of this, I'll make sure to reward you greatly!"

Transcendent Mortal 5-dan Consonant Spirit realm was a difficult hurdle of the Transcendent Mortal realm due to how intricately it was tied with the study of souls.

He had been trapped in Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle for a very long time already. He had tried many ways to achieve a breakthrough, but all of them turned out to be futile. Thus, when Song Chao delivered a Soulless Metal Humanoid to him just a period ago, he immediately studied it intensely as though it was his only lifeline.

Soulless Metal Humanoids were the personal bodyguards of the ancient soul oracles, and the secret behind souls could be uncovered from them. Even though he was still

unable to comprehend how these Soulless Metal Humanoids could be formed, he was able to gain a deeper insight into the concept of souls. This would prove to be greatly beneficial to his future breakthrough into the Consonant Spirit realm.

"Elder, you're being too courteous. I'm glad that this artifact is useful to you..." Song Chao hurriedly nodded.

"Un!" Hearing the other party's humble words, Elder Hu nodded his head in satisfaction. "For you to pay me so many visits in the past few days, did something happen?"

Even though he was in seclusion, he still maintained some basic awareness of his surroundings.

Song Chao hurriedly nodded his head. "I met that person who sold me the Soulless Metal Humanoid just a few days ago. This time, he offered me the grade-7 Metal Coffin which is used to store Soulless Metal Humanoids. Thinking that it might be beneficial for elder's study... I bought it down!"

"Grade-7 Metal Coffin? A coffin used to house Soulless Metal Humanoid? Where is it? Show me!"

Elder Hu's eyes lit up and his breathing hastened.

As he was unable to achieve a breakthrough for such a long period of time, he chose to turn his attention to the study of souls. After years of research, he had learnt quite a bit about the subject. In his research, he had stumbled by the subject of soul oracles and thus, he understood the significance of this coffin.

If he had obtained these items earlier, he would have enjoyed a much greater improvement in the past few days. Even if he was still unable to reach Consonant Spirit realm, his soul would at least become much stronger than before.

"Yes!"

Flicking his wrist, a massive coffin appeared before them.

It was the coffin that Zhang Xuan sold to him for one middle-tier spirit stone back at the herb garden.

"To think that it's a grade-7 Metal Coffin in perfect condition..." Seeing the inscriptions on the coffin, Elder Hu's eyes slowly grew brighter and brighter.

The soul oracles had entrusted blacksmiths to forge these coffins specially for their Soulless Metal Humanoid, and they had the effect of maintaining a Soulless Metal Humanoid in its peak condition for millenniums to come.

"Based on the words of the seller, this coffin was the one used to house the Soulless Metal Humanoid in elder's hands!" Song Chao continued.

"Oh..."

Elder Hu nodded his head. After assessing the coffin carefully, he raised his head and said, "The person who sold those things to you... Where is he? Did you ask him where he obtained those items from?"

"That... I didn't!" Song Chao shook his head.

Under the other party's Impartation of Heaven's Will, he would lose all basic critical thinking ability. Every single meeting would only end with him forking out spirit stones. Under such circumstances, how was he supposed to ask anything at all?

"You didn't ask?" Elder Hu frowned.

Recalling the words that the young man said that day, Song Chao hurriedly replied, "Even though I didn't ask, I know that there are at least three more of such Soulless Metal Humanoids and grade-7 Metal Coffins in his possession. In fact... it seems like he even has the higher tier... Crimson Metal Coffin!"

"Do you mean that 'shattered by none the lock of Crimson Metal, undisturbed a rest for ten millenniums'...The coffin that even Transcendent Mortal 9-dan experts are unable break open, and is used to store a soul oracle's physical body?"

Elder Hu's breathing hastened as his eyes lit up.

A Grade-7 Metal Coffin was only a tool used to store Soulless Metal Humanoid. On the other hand, the Crimson Metal Coffin was something that was used to store the body of the soul oracle himself. Even though they were both coffins, the value of the latter was definitely much greater than the former!

That fellow actually had such good stuff?

"Yes!" Song Chao nodded his head.

"Great! Where is he? Is he selling that Crimson Metal Coffin? What does he want for it?" Elder Hu hurriedly asked.

"That... He intends to sell the Crimson Metal Coffin, just that... I didn't have sufficient money on me then, so I couldn't afford it. Putting everything aside, just this grade-7 Metal Coffin is already worth an entire middle-tier spirit stone..." Song Chao said.

"The grade-7 Metal Coffin is the work of a 4-star craftsman, and it has the effect of maintaining the physical condition of a Soulless Metal Humanoid for millenniums to come. Not only is it not expensive, it is in fact rather cheap! Not bad!"

Elder Hu nodded his head.

Given that it was the work of a 4-star craftsman, and considering the precious materials involved and the secret of soul oracles hidden within it, a middle-tier spirit stone was indeed relatively cheap in comparison.

This was an extremely fair price.

Hearing that he made a fair trade, Song Chao heaved a sigh of relief before asking, "So... does Elder Hu intend to buy it?"

"This is a rare opportunity, we have to obtain it. However... you should also know that even though I am an elder, my stipends are limited. Since a grade-7 Metal Coffin is worth a middle-tier spirit stones, nothing needs to be said about the Crimson Metal Coffin. Even I... am unable to fork out such a price!"

Even though Elder Hu was excited, he didn't allow it to get ahead of himself.

The annual stipends of an elder wasn't unlimited. The number of middle-tier spirit stones he had at hand was extremely limited.

The elder couldn't help but ask, "Right, have you tried buying it with Tutelage Jade Tokens?"

"Tutelage Jade Token? The person selling it is a master teacher himself, and his rank..."

can only be higher than mine. He won't want the jade tokens..."

Song Chao smiled bitterly.

Back then, when he intended to buy the Rousing From the Drunken Dreams on the auction, the other party refused to sell the work for anything other than spirit stones. After learning that Zhang Shi was the seller, he immediately understood the reason.

The other party was a master teacher himself, and chances were that he had an even more formidable teacher above him. While Tutelage Jade Tokens were incomparably valuable to ordinary cultivators, to master teachers like them, their value was negligible.

It was just like how an owner of a gold mine wouldn't want to trade his possessions just to earn back gold.

"Master teacher?" Elder Hu was taken aback.

If the other party wasn't a master teacher, there was a variety of means they could use—guiding the other party or accepting the other party as his student. However, given that the other party was a master teacher like them, the things that they could do both on the surface and beneath the surface would become terribly limited.

The Master Teacher Pavilion was an organization to govern and protect master teachers. If they were to be caught doing harm on the other party for greed, their entire sect would suffer the wrath of the headquarters.

After a moment of hesitation, Elder Hu said, "Never mind, where is he now? I'll talk to him and ask him for the price of the Crimson Metal Coffin. This way, I can make preparations."

The safest and only viable method available was to buy it. It was fortunate that the other party had the intentions to sell it.

"He's currently in the guest residence of Myriad Kingdom Alliance's Alliance Head Residence!" Song Chao said.

While he had been visiting Elder Hu the past few days, he had been keeping a lookout for Zhang Xuan's whereabouts.

After leaving the herb garden, Zhang Xuan didn't hide his whereabouts. Given how even Su Shi and the others were able to easily hear of the other party's whereabouts, it wasn't too difficult for him to do so as well.

"Alright then. Prepare the mounts, we'll head over!"

Elder Hu nodded his head.

...

Hu!

Zhang Xuan finally came to a stop.

"There isn't sufficient spiritual energy..."

Zhang Xuan thought that a middle-tier spirit stone should be more than sufficient for him to reach Origin Energy realm pinnacle. But from the looks of it now, he was still underestimating his spiritual energy consumption rate.

Along with the rise in his cultivation, the spiritual energy he needed to make a breakthrough was increasing exponentially. A middle-tier spirit stone only could fuel him up to Origin Energy realm advanced stage. He was still quite a distance away from reaching pinnacle.

"I'll need at least two more middle-tier spirit stone before reaching pinnacle!"

Making a rough calculation, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

The spirit stone he had obtained from Hall Master Han was used up in the midst of cultivating his soul, and this spirit stone turned out to be insufficient to raise his zhenqi cultivation as well. Where was he supposed to find more middle-tier spirit stones?

He thought that he could be considered wealthy already. In the end, as soon as he started cultivating, he ended up being plagued by the issue of lack of spirit stones once again.

On top of that, the Soulrouse Grass also requires huge amount of energy to bloom as well. Based on Zhang Xuan's estimations, the energy required was much greater than

the amount needed for him to reach Origin Energy realm pinnacle.

"I really have to find some way to earn some money..."

Rubbing his glabella, Zhang Xuan stood up.

Earning money... It was easier said than done. What was he supposed to do about it?

There were only a few middle-tier spirit stones in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance's Alliance Head Residence, needless to say, other powers with the Myriad Kingdom Alliance wouldn't have as much.

'Forget it, I should head to the Yin-Yang Lake first. Based on what Pavilion Master Kang said, the area is rich in spiritual energy, making it extremely apt for one's cultivation. Perhaps, I might be able to raise my cultivation even without using spirit stones... '

Zhang Xuan thought.

Since it was a precious ground that enhanced one's rate of cultivation, perhaps he would be able to raise his cultivation even without using spirit stones.

"But before that, I should try to obtain the Transcendent Mortal 3-dan cultivation manual of Heaven's Path Divine Art first!"

Only with a cultivation technique could he raise his cultivation to higher heights. It would be a tragedy if the conditions there turned to be really beneficial to his cultivation, but he didn't have the required cultivation technique to raise his cultivation.

"There are many of such cultivation techniques in the Master Teacher Pavilion. As a 4-star master teacher, I have the qualifications to browse through them now!"

In terms of quantity of cultivation technique manuals and battle technique manuals, there was nowhere that could surpass the Master Teacher Pavilion's library.

In any case, Zhang Xuan was already a 4-star master teacher, so he had the qualifications to browse through all of the books. Since he had time now, he decided to head over to take a look.

Thinking so, he stood up and walked out.

Chapter 547

Ruohuan on the Verge of Crying

Right after Zhang Xuan left, Song Chao and Elder Hu arrived at the residence.

After waiting for several hours, they could only leave regretfully.

Right when the duo was waiting, Zhang Xuan arrived at the Master Teacher Pavilion's library.

As the center of the entire alliance, Myriad Kingdom City was both an economic powerhouse and a martial arts hub. Secret manuals were something that was never and would never be in short supply here.

Upon entering the library, Zhang Xuan immediately saw rows and rows of bookshelves extending beyond the limit of his sight.

In terms of quantity, even the humongous library he had visited in Honghai City was far from a match with this.

'With so many books, I won't be able to duplicate all of them without several days of effort even if I were to go full throttle...' Zhang Xuan contemplated.

Given that he was heading to the Yin-Yang Lake with Pavilion Master Kang the next day, even if he were to give it his all, it was clearly impractical for him to duplicate everything in his Library of Heaven's Path within the limited time he had.

'Forget it, I should just focus on cultivation techniques for now!'

Knowing the impossibility of the matter, he decided to focus on the bookshelves relating to cultivation techniques and battle techniques.

As a 4-star master teacher, he had access to all of the resources in the Master Teacher Pavilion. Soon, he found the area where Transcendent Mortal 3-dan cultivation techniques were placed.

With just a glance, Zhang Xuan could tell there was more than a thousand books here.

'Flaws!'

Muttering beneath his breath, he placed his finger on the first book and started collecting the books.

'Compile!'

Soon, a complete Transcendent Mortal 3-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art appeared before Zhang Xuan's eyes.

Without sufficient spirit stones, he was still unable to cultivate it at the moment. Thus, he proceeded forward, hoping to find Transcendent Mortal 4-dan cultivation technique manuals.

But after looking around, he couldn't help but shake his head.

There were indeed Transcendent Mortal 4-dan cultivation technique manuals here, but there were only a hundred books or so. He was still a long way from compiling a complete Heaven's Path Divine Art.

But considering that the strongest expert in Myriad Kingdom Alliance was only at Transcendent Mortal 4-dan, such books were likely to be carefully hoarded by the various powers in the alliance. As such, it was already rather impressive that the Master Teacher Pavilion had a hundred of such books.

'Now to see whether there are any books on soul here... '

Even so, Zhang Xuan didn't wallow in his disappointment. He quickly moved on to look for soul secret manuals.

Having received Mo Hunsheng's inheritance, Zhang Xuan had learned the cultivation technique of soul oracles. However, as there were flaws in the manuals from Transcendent Mortal 3-dan and onward, he only cultivated his soul until Transcendent Mortal 2-dan.

Since there were all kinds of books here, there just might be some manual on souls that might be useful to him here. If he were to compile it along with his existing knowledge, he just might be able to form higher level Heaven's Path Soul Art.

The rise in the cultivation of a soul also boosted his strength as well.

Zhang Xuan looked around as he walked between the shelves, and a long period of time later, he finally stopped.

"'Ways of Strengthening Your Soul', 'What You Have to Know About Consonant Spirit Realm', 'How to Cultivate Your Soul in Clarifying Turbidity Realm'...These are notes from master teachers of previous generations!"

Zhang Xuan's hands brushed across the books.

The soul oracle inheritance had been terminated so it was impossible to find their cultivation techniques anywhere. However, many experts had left behind notes regarding the tempering of one's soul as it was a fundamental condition for reaching Consonant Spirit Realm.

Even though the noted had little to do with soul oracles, they detailed the profound secret of souls. As such, they could be used to fill up the gaps in the soul oracle's cultivation techniques.

Thus, Zhang Xuan began collecting all of these books, and around eleven hours later, he finally managed to collect several thousand of books on the introduction and tempering of souls.

Having overexerted himself in the process, Zhang Xuan's body felt heavy and he was on the verge of sleeping already. Even so, his eyes were glowing in excitement.

"Compile!"

After conditioning his state for a moment, he immersed his consciousness into the Library of Heaven's Path and fused the knowledge in the books along with the inheritance of the soul oracles.

"Hmm? I have the Heaven's Path Soul Art for both Transcendent Mortal 3-dan and 4-dan..."

After double checking the results, Zhang Xuan's eyes glowed in agitation.

He was only giving it a try since there was no better method he could think of. In truth, he hadn't thought it was likely to succeed. Yet, the effects exceeded his expectations.

He had managed to complete the Transcendent Mortal 3-dan and 4-dan of Heaven's Path Soul Art in a single go.

In other words, as long as he had sufficient middle-tier spirit stones, his soul cultivation could easily reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan!

"Not bad..."

Zhang Xuan's lips curled up into a smile.

Even though it was a disappointment that he couldn't compile the perfect Transcendent Mortal 4-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art, the results weren't too bad since he'd managed to complete Transcendent Mortal 3-dan and 4-dan of the Heaven's Path Soul Art.

"To think that a night has already passed..."

Unknowingly, while looking for the cultivation technique manuals, a night had already passed.

Walking out of the library, the sun was already high up in the sky, glaring down at him.

"Zhang shi, you're finally out. The pavilion master is waiting for you at the backyard..."

An apprentice walked up to inform Zhang Xuan.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head before walking over to the backyard. It seemed like Pavilion Master Kang and Ruohuan gongzi had already been waiting for some for him already.

"Alright, let's head off!"

Seeing Zhang Xuan walking over, Pavilion Master Kang raised his hand and a massive beast slowly landed on the ground.

It was a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle aerial spirit beast. Most probably, it was the private of Pavilion Master Kang or the Master Teacher Pavilion.

"Ah, hold on for a moment. I would like to bring a student along with me..." Zhang Xuan said.

"A student?"

Pavilion Master Kang frowned. "The Origin Flame Glacier Plain isn't under the jurisdiction of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. It's an independent power, and I had to pay a heavy price before I could obtain these two slots for you two..."

If he could bring people to the Origin Flame Glacier Plain freely, he would have surely brought Fu Xiaochen and the others over long ago. There would be no need for him to waste time on a selection beforehand, cutting it so close for the Master Teacher Tournament.

It was due to the limit that he'd had to go through so much trouble.

"Only two slots? It's impossible to add another person in?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"That won't do. In fact, the two slots are not guaranteed-you all have to undergo the tests of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain first. If it was that easy to negotiate with the Origin Flame Glacier Plain, the master teachers of our Master Teacher Pavilion would be much stronger than they are now. At the very least, we wouldn't be ranking at the bottom in nearly every tournament!"

Pavilion Master Kang smiled bitterly.

"If that's the case... I'll pass on my opportunity to my student then," Zhang Xuan said.

As long as he had sufficient middle-tier spirit stones, it didn't make a difference to him whether he entered the Yin-Yang Lake or not. Since there were only two slots, he would rather pass the chance on to Zhao Ya. After all, this was a rare opportunity for her to further awaken her unique constitution.

"This won't do. You're Myriad Kingdom Alliance's greatest hope in the Master Teacher Tournament, how can you pass on such an opportunity!"

Upon hearing the decision Zhang Xuan made, Pavilion Master Kang quickly refuted his words.

Are you joking?

I'm still waiting for you to break the records in the Master Teacher Tournament. If you don't go to the Yin-Yang Lake, wouldn't the heavy price I paid for this opportunity go

to waste?

"My student has to come along!" Zhang Xuan said resolutely. "How about this? If the other party make things difficult for you, I can negotiate with him on your behalf."

"This..."

Pavilion Master Kang shook his head. "You're underestimating the men of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain. If it's that easy to negotiate with them, I would have surely tried to obtain more slots. But actually, they aren't to be blamed for this. There's a fundamental limit to the number of the people who can enter the Yin-Yang Lake every time it opens. It isn't even enough for their own use, let alone, outsiders like us."

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Having read many books, he knew that many of such natural blessed lands had a fundamental limit to them. If too many people were to cultivate on such lands, it was very easy for the place to 'dry up'.

As such, a limit was imposed in view of its long-term sustainability.

"Forget it, you should bring your student along with you for now; I'll negotiate with them later. We'll think of another solution if that fails!"

Seeing the resolute attitude of the young man, Pavilion Master Kang rubbed his glabella and said.

"Un, let's give it try first. Perhaps, we might really be able to get an additional slot!"

Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

While walking there, Zhang Xuan had seen many different things. He had also realized many things that others deemed to be impossible. Even if the men of the Origin Flame Glacier Plains were to be difficult, Zhang Xuan was confident that he could find a flaw in the other party and exploit that to resolve the situation.

"Un!"

Having come to a decision, Zhang Xuan sent an apprentice to call Zhao Ya over. After which, the four of them got onto the back of a spirit beast and flew toward Myriad

Kingdom City.

Yesterday, when he returned to the residence, he had entrusted the Demon Cinque Beast with the responsibility of overlooking the safety of the others. Given its immense strength and Zhang Xuan's identity as a 4-star master teacher, there shouldn't be anyone so blind as to harm his students.

Not to mention, Zhao Feiwu, the princess of the alliance, was looking after them as well.

Thus, there was no need for Zhang Xuan to worry for the safety of Zheng Yang and the others.

As for the Soulrouse Grass, as it couldn't be placed in his storage ring, he didn't bring it along with him. Instead, he had Wang Ying and Sun Qiang take care of it. Given their meticulous personality, it should be in safe hands.

This departure was, in truth, a secret of sorts. Even the other master teachers in the Master Teacher Pavilion didn't know about this. Otherwise, if news were to leak out and the other powers tried to hinder them, things might turn out to be disastrous.

But of course, the Myriad Kingdom Alliance had always fared badly in the tournament. The other powers probably had their hands busy with tripping over the potential top ten contenders instead.

...

White clouds flitted past them as the spirit beast soared through the skies. The four of them were seated in the room on the back of the spirit beast. At this moment, Pavilion Master Kang was staring at Zhao Ya, and the perplexed expression on his face was gradually deepening.

After a moment, Pavilion Master Kang couldn't help but exclaim, "Zhang shi, the physical constitution of your student... doesn't seem to be ordinary!"

As a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, he possessed outstanding eye of discernment. Even though Zhang Xuan had Zhao Ya conceal the true nature of her Pure Yin Body to avoid trouble, it still wasn't sufficient to escape from Pavilion Master Kang's sharp eyes.

"Pavilion master sure has an incredible eye of discernment. Zhao Ya possesses the Pure Yin Body. That's why I wish to bring her along so that she could cultivate at the Yin-Yang Lake," Zhang Xuan admitted.

"Indeed..."

Pavilion Master Kang's breathing hastened.

As the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion, he understood how fearsome such a unique constitution was. Cultivators possessing a Pure Yin Body became insanely strong once their unique constitution was unlocked, and from the looks of it, this young lady seemed to have awakened a portion of it already.

It was no wonder Zhang Shi insisted on bringing the latter to the Yin-Yang Lake, even offering to give up this opportunity to her. For the future of such a talented student, the sacrifice was indeed worthy.

"The Pure Yin Body is one of the rare Innate Unique Constitutions. Once it awakens entirely, one's body would become completely flawless. With such a constitution, one's rate of cultivation would reach an insane speed..."

Pavilion Master Kang recited the unique properties of the Pure Yin Body, and the more he spoke, the brighter his eyes glowed. A moment later, he couldn't hold it back anymore. Turning around to look at Ruohuan gongzi, he said, "Alright, I've decided. Ruohuan, you shall pass your slot on to her!"

"Ah?"

Ruohuan gongzi's body swayed, and his eyes widened in shock.

Talk all you want... but why did you have to involve me in this?

It wasn't easy for me to get this slot; do you know how hard I worked? Upon hearing that I was going to the Yin-Yang Lake yesterday, I spent the entire day preparing everything I would need. And yet, due to him bringing along his student, you're going to deprive me of my slot?

"Teacher..."

Ruohuan gongzi immediately looked at his teacher with a panicked expression.

"Say no more, this matter is decided. Don't worry, I will definitely make it up to you for this!"

Pavilion Master Kang waved his hands to signify that this matter wasn't up for debate.

Zhang shi was the Myriad Kingdom Alliance's greatest hope in the Master Teacher Tournament so he had to raise his cultivation as fast as possible.

Without sufficient strength, he would be at a disadvantage for many of the tests.

On the other hand, his student possessed the Pure Yin Body, so the opportunity at Yin-Yang Lake was incomparably important to her.

After pondering over the matter, the only option was to abandon his own student.

"..." Ruohuan gongzi burst into tears.

Chapter 548

Origin Flame Glacier Plain

Ignoring the crying Ruohuan gongzi, Zhang Xuan asked, "Who are those Origin Flame Glacier Plain men you spoke of?"

It wasn't that he was without sympathy but that he thought there was definitely a chance at turning the situation around here. Besides, even if they were to end up being stuck with only two slots, Zhang Xuan could simply compensate the other party by providing some pointers to his cultivation.

In any case, Zhang Xuan's guidance would definitely be much more effective than training in that Yin-Yang Lake.

"Origin Flame Glacier Plain is the name of an extremely powerful influence. Just like the Apothecary Guild and Blacksmith Guild, they wield a sizeable number of spirit veins and blessed lands. As such, even though I am the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion, I dare not offend them easily. Thus, the most I could do was to propose a fair trade with them," Pavilion Master Kang explained.

"Spirit veins and blessed lands?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

Just this in itself was sufficient to show that the power was anything but ordinary. After all, given the innumerable formidable powers in the world, how could they possibly allow a small fry hog onto such precious resources?

"Indeed. Every branch of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain has a court chief, and I happen to be acquainted with the current generation of court chief. That was how I managed to obtain the two slots to undergo the trial... Honestly speaking, it'll rely heavily on your abilities whether you can enter or not later on!" Pavilion Master Kang said.

"Acquainted?"

"Un, she was once injured, and I saved her!"

Stroking his beard, Pavilion Master Kang said, "Do you remember the case study on

the person who cultivated the Great Ancient Incursion Art, the one whose chest was wounded by searing sword qi?"

"Oh!"

Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

When he first met Pavilion Master Kang, the latter had once posed a test to him. The test was based on a real-life case study of a severely-wounded cultivator attempting to achieve a breakthrough to Transcendent Mortal realm.

That situation was extremely complex, and given the difficulty in the level of treatment, it was natural that Pavilion Master Kang would win the other party's gratitude after the matter.

After chatting a while longer, Zhang Xuan gained a deeper understanding of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain.

This power controlled a significant portion of blessed lands all over the world, and one thing that they didn't lack was resources. As such, wealth meant nothing much to them. Only a master teacher could possibly make them willingly fork out two slots.

After chatting for a while longer, the group started on their cultivation.

Due to a lack of spirit stones, Zhang Xuan didn't focus on attempting breakthroughs in his cultivation. Instead, he spent his time reinforcing his cultivation and enhancing his maximum zhenqi capacity.

After his cultivation reached Origin Energy realm advanced stage, his strength had increased tremendously once more. His strength of 200,000 ding had increased by twofold to 400,000 ding.

A normal Origin Energy realm primary stage expert would only wield a might of 150,000 ding, intermediate stage 200,000 ding, advanced stage 250,000 ding, and pinnacle 300,000 ding. On the other hand, Yin-Yang realm was divided by a difference of 100,000 ding between each tier-primary stage 500,000 ding, intermediate stage 600,000 ding, advanced stage 700,000 ding, pinnacle 800,000 ding!

Despite being only at Origin Energy realm advanced stage, Zhang Xuan already wielded power much greater than that of an Origin Energy realm pinnacle cultivator.

If he were to complement it with his Transcendent Mortal 2-dan pinnacle soul cultivation, his total might would exceed 700,000 ding. With such strength, he would be able to stand toe-to-toe with even Yin-Yang realm advanced stage cultivators!

But of course, this was all just theory. Strength wasn't the determining factor of one's fighting prowess. More important than that was one's battle instinct and abilities. If it was that easy to challenge those of higher cultivation realms, master teachers would truly be too overpowered.

But even so, a Yin-Yang realm intermediate stage expert should still be a piece of cake.

Along with Zhang Xuan's rise in strength, his reaction speed and physical prowess had improved significantly. While the change wasn't as obvious as that when he first stepped into Transcendent Mortal realm, there was still a clear growth in his overall fighting prowess.

"It just happens that I still have some time. I should study Heaven's Path Sword Art, Heaven's Path Spear Art, and Heaven's Path Saber Art once more!"

Reinforcing his cultivation had increased his zhenqi capacity significantly. Pleased with the results, Zhang Xuan decided to turn his attention to battle techniques instead.

The current level of Heaven's Path Sword Art and Heaven's Path Movement Art was mainly compiled from the books in Tianxuan Kingdom. Even though he had augmented it several times with more books, the current Heaven's Path Sword Art was already insufficient to meet his requirements. Thus, he had to reorganize everything and compile even stronger moves.

Along his way here, Zhang Xuan had gathered quite a few battle techniques-not to mention, he even collected all of the battle technique books from the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. As such, all he had to do was to reorganize the books for compilation.

Thus, he first worked on Heaven's Path Sword Art.

Sword is the emperor of all weapons. There was nearly no cultivator who would be ignorant of swordsmanship. As such, there were innumerable secret manuals on swordsmanship, thus making it convenient to find them.

Not too long later, Zhang Xuan managed to reorganize the entire set of Heaven's Path Sword Art.

Due to the narrow space on the back of the beast, Zhang Xuan was unable to execute it. Thus, he simply played out the skill in his head. It didn't take him too long to master the technique.

After that, he turned his attention to saber art, spear art, fist art, leg art, and movement art.

With the enhanced Heaven's Path battle techniques, Zhang Xuan's fighting prowess rose tremendously.

If Zhang Xuan could only match up to an Origin Energy realm pinnacle cultivator with just his zhenqi cultivation only previously, at this moment, he could easily match up to a Yin-Yang realm primary stage cultivator.

Factoring in his soul cultivation as well, probably even a Transcendent Mortal 3-dan Yin-Yang realm advanced stage cultivator could be easily destroyed by him.

But of course, his greatest trump card at the moment wasn't his battle techniques-it was the Eye of Insight and Impartation of Heaven's Will.

The former allowed him to see through flaws whereas the latter allowed him to beguile the minds of others. With these two trump cards, he could beguile even Pavilion Master Kang easily.

While Zhang Xuan was cultivating, Zhao Ya had been working hard too. After the last few days of hard work, she finally surpassed the bottleneck of Zhizun realm and advanced into the Half-Transcension realm.

In just a short few months, she'd advanced from a Fighter 1-dan to such a realm. This rate of progress was sufficient to leave innumerable people dumbfounded.

Sometime later, while Zhang Xuan was in the midst of cultivating, Pavilion Master Kang announced, "The Yin-Yang Lake is just right ahead!"

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan calmed his cultivation and stood up.

Through the windows, he saw a towering mountain not too far away. Amidst the peak piled with a thick layer of white snow, a conspicuous dark-green court stood.

"This is the Glacier Plain Court. The Yin-Yang Lake is inside the court!"

Pavilion Master Kang pointed.

Taking a closer look, one could see a plaque on the entrance of the court, and the three words 'Glacier Plain Court' was exceptionally eye-catching.

Silent but dignified.

Standing by the window, Pavilion Master Kang stared at the snowing mountain peak not too far away as he said, "Just by looking at the thick layer of snow here, you probably can't imagine that this place used to be a volcano before the Glacier Plain Court was built. Back then, the searing heat was so unbearable that even a Transcendent Mortal cultivator would suffer grievous burns if he attempted to cross the volcano."

"Volcano?"

Not only was Zhang Xuan stunned, even Ruohuan gongzi seemed to be bewildered by those words.

This towering mountain was completely cloaked in white snow. Just the sight was enough to leave one shuddering in coldness. How could such a place have been a volcano before that?

"Honestly speaking, when I first heard of this news, I shared your reactions as well!"

Seeing through everyone's bewilderment, Pavilion Master Kang shook his head. "This is strength of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain! Not only do they possess the strength to claim blessed lands, they are also capable of changing the geomancy of a land to nurture the blessed land. Under their hands, many treacherous environments had turned into a spiritual energy haven that many looked forward to."

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask, "Could it be that... the men of Origin Flame Glacier Plain could be considered to be of a unique occupation?"

To be capable of turning the unusable into a treasure, converting a feared volcano into a snow mountain; unless it was a unique occupation, Zhang Xuan found it hard to imagine that there was any power capable of such a formidable feat.

"Your way of putting it can't be said to be wrong, but it isn't entirely correct either!"

Seeing the confused looks on everyone's faces, Pavilion Master Kang chuckled. "Whether a certain heritage is considered as a unique occupation or not is decided by the Master Teacher Pavilion. One of the factors the Master Teacher Pavilion uses for making such decision is whether the heritage has a complete system of knowledge and a strict progressive ability ranking system. But there are simply some occupations whose members are unable to be judged under a hierarchical structure, such as herbologists.

"The capability of a herbologist depends heavily on their knowledge. Often, medicinal herbs required very specific knowledge to cultivate them, and it was possible for a highly skilled herbologist to be unable to cultivate a basic medicinal herb. Thus, a progressive ability ranking system couldn't really work in this case...

"An occupation without a strict progressive ranking system cannot be considered as a unique occupation. While it is true that the men of Origin Flame Glacier Plain possess mysterious means to turn a volcano into a snow mountain, a marsh into a plain, but... they had no true heritage or a specific way of doing so. Rather, their abilities seem to be more closely related to their talent and ability!

"Besides, there are very few members of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain alive in the world. Even in the area of jurisdiction of Myriad Kingdom Alliance or even the entire Huanyu Empire, there is only one of such branch... Given such, how could it possibly be proclaimed as an occupation? But at the same time, they did indeed possess a unique ability, a characteristic that only occupations have. Thus, even the Master Teacher Pavilion was a little troubled and was unable to come to a verdict over this matter."

Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

An occupation must have a unique heritage that everyone could take on, and it must have a lot of branches across the world.

But the Origin Flame Glacier Plain men were sorely lacking in their number of members, and their heritage was slightly chaotic. Not to mention, their ability relied heavily on their innate talent as well. As such, they had yet to be proclaimed as an occupation.

"To turn a searing volcano into a frigid snow mountain, how did they do it?" Zhao Ya asked curiously.

"I'm not sure about the details, but it is certain that this place was a volcano a thousand years ago. It was said that the men of Origin Flame Glacier Plain traveled here and reshaped this place over the course of a century to turn it into its current state. On top of that, they even created the Yin-Yang Lake where the power of yin and yang amalgamate with one another, creating a paradoxical combination of clarity and turbidity. It is said that any cultivator that has yet to reach Transcendent Mortal 5-dan will benefit greatly from cultivating in it."

Pavilion Master Kang shook his head. "However, the slots for the Yin-Yang Lake are very limited every year. It is insufficient for even their internal consumption, let alone, to offer it to outsiders. Throughout the years, there were many influential powers who approached them, only to leave in disappointment."

The ability to reshape the environment was a secret of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain men. Even as a powerful 4-star master teacher, he had no access to such secrets.

"Perhaps, it might be a powerful formation created via the terrain such as the mountain pulse and such!" Ruohuan gongzi interjected.

One common method used to change one's environment was via formations. Thus, Ruohuan gongzi immediately thought of the use of formation.

"It isn't a formation. The mountain range extends for several hundred kilometers, how huge of a formation would be required to encompass the area? Not to mention, the spiritual energy required to sustain its activation over so many years?" Pavilion Master Kang said.

Even though formations had the power to alter an environment, its area of effect tended to be limited. While it was theoretically possible to create a formation that extended over several hundred kilometers and modify an entire mountain, it was nearly completely unfeasible to implement it.

Even a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert would be unable to accomplish such a task! Perhaps, only the legendary beings surpassing the 9-dans would be capable of doing so.

"Indeed, it's not a formation!"

Zhang Xuan shook his head too. When Pavilion Master Kang raised the topic earlier, Zhang Xuan used the Eye of Insight to look into the matter as well. There wasn't the

slightest trace of a formation across the entire mountain range, so that definitely wasn't the case.

Otherwise, given his eye of discernment, it was impossible for him to see through something so basic.

Chuckling, Pavilion Master Kang interjected the conversation and said, "Forget it, let's not bother about that anymore. Our motive here is to enter the Yin-Yang Lake, not to deduce its origin!

"Later on, when we're in, do not act on your own whim. Follow my lead. I'll try to vie for three slots, and even if that fails, we have to try to secure our two slots at the very least!"

"Un!" Everyone nodded.

"Good, let's descend then!"

Hearing the voice, the aerial spirit beast flapped its wings and began gliding toward the Glacier Plain Court.

Chapter 549

I'll Give You One Chance

The group of four alighted from the aerial spirit beast as soon as it landed on the solid ground.

Bits of snow were falling from the sky. It was cold, but given that even the weakest of them, Zhao Ya, was at the Half-Transcension realm, the frigid weather didn't affect them much.

After tidying himself up, Zhang Xuan looked at the Glacier Plain Court before him.

From a distance, he could already sense majesty and grandness from the court. But even so, the true extent of its scale didn't hit him until he was right before it. From the front, it extended for more than a thousand meters, and it was around fifty to sixty meters high. It seemed as though it was a residence made for giants.

The entrance gate was nearly a dozen meter tall, and it looked extremely heavy.

Walking up, Pavilion Master Kang took in a deep breath and announced, "Kang Gan of Myriad Kingdom City has come as per our agreement. I seek Court Chief Wu's audience!"

A moment later, 'jiyaaaa!', the huge gate opened, and several figures came out. They were all ladies dressed in white robe. The one leading the group walked up and said, "Pavilion Master Kang, our court chief invites you in!"

The white robe of the ladies put against the snowing landscape created quite a beautiful yet desolate sight.

"Thank you!"

Nodding his head, Pavilion Master Kang led the group in.

Zhang Xuan observed the white-robed female disciples while walking into the court. They were young, probably only in their twenties, but their cultivation was

astounding. They were all around Transcendent Mortal 3-dan at the minimum.

They could be considered as geniuses to possess such cultivation levels at their age.

The lady who had welcomed Pavilion Master Kang in previously had even reached Transcendent Mortal 3-dan pinnacle.

Walking into the Glacier Plain Court, the first thing Zhang Xuan noticed was that the spiritual energy in the air seemed to have gotten even more lively. It seemed as though it would dive through his pores at any moment, making it much easier to cultivate.

"What lively spiritual energy!"

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Even though the concentration of spiritual energy was no different from how it was outside, the spiritual energy was exceptionally lively. Even if one didn't intentionally attempt to guide the spiritual energy into their body, it would still seep in on their own accord to temper one's body and nourish one's cultivation, thus enhancing one's rate of cultivation.

It was just like a high-pressured hose against a lake of stagnant water. It was clear which one would flow faster through a stream.

The high cultivation of these young ladies proved testimony to that fact. This place was definitely a blessed land for cultivating.

The further they walked in, the greater the liveliness of spiritual energy. It created a compelling urge that motivated one to sit down on the spot to cultivate.

And this wasn't even the Yin-Yang Lake yet. It was no wonder why Pavilion Master Kang would go through so much effort to bring them here. It was indeed worth the effort.

Other than white-robed ladies, there were red-robed ladies in the court as well. In contrast to the cold disposition of the former, the latter felt fiery as though compressed flames were threatening to burst out at any moment.

Sensing Zhang Xuan's doubts, Pavilion Master Kang said, "The cultivation technique of the Glacier Plain Court is the purest attribute cultivation technique, and they can be

divided into yin and yang!"

Zhang Xuan nodded.

Actually, even without the other's explanation, he could tell as much via the Eye of Insight.

Harnessing the attribute of flame, the yang cultivation technique granted a searing edge to the zhenqi of the red-robed ladies, thus building a fiery disposition. On the other hand, the white-robed ladies who guided them were austere, and it seemed as though they rejected all that tried to approach them.

A difference in cultivation technique would also cause a difference in one's disposition.

Pavilion Master Kang continued, "The Yin-Yang Lake is divided into the Yang Lake, Yin Lake, and the Amalgamation Lake. One would have to enter the segment compatible with one's cultivation technique to benefit from the effects of Yin-Yang Lake."

Zhang Xuan was surprised upon hearing those words.

When he first heard of Yin-Yang Lake, he thought that it was just the name of a blessed land. But from the looks of it now, it wasn't as simple as he thought.

After walking around for a bit longer, the lady guiding them around stopped. "The court chief is inside, please proceed in."

Pavilion Master Kang and group walked in.

It was an extremely vast hall. Unlike the extravagance that Zhang Xuan expected, the ornaments that filled the room were relatively simple. A lady was seated at the topmost center seat, and she was looking down at the group with an impassive expression.

Zhang Xuan assessed the lady before him.

She seemed to be in her thirties, but perhaps due to her beautiful features, time didn't seem to leave much of a mark on her face. Her black hair complemented perfectly with her white clothes, and she looked as though she had come out from a painting.

But of course, while she was pretty, she was still unable to compare up to Zhao Ya.

Thus, after taking a brief look, Zhang Xuan began assessing her cultivation.

Her cultivation seemed to be deeply concealed, making it hard to detect. Even so, Zhang Xuan still felt danger from her. The other party's soul seemed to exert an immense pressure on his soul, as though the true nature of his soul would be easily seen through.

'Is this... Consonant Spirit realm?' Zhang Xuan thought.

Zhang Xuan felt even greater pressure from her than from Alliance Head Zhao, Xue Yiyao, and Pavilion Master Kang. Given that the latter three were all Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle experts, most likely, this court chief had already surpassed that level.

At Transcendent Mortal 5-dan Consonant Spirit realm, one's soul would be significantly augmented, granting one greater control over the environment.

Such an expert could wield immense might with the slightest of movements, and their fighting prowess was extraordinary.

"Eye of Insight!"

Activating the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan took a look at the other party and frowned.

In the midst of his observation, Pavilion Master Kang stepped forward and clasped his fist.

"Court Chief Wu, pleased to meet you once again!"

Knowing that the other party's cultivation was above his, even Pavilion Master Kang, as a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, didn't dare to pull his weight. Thus, his attitude was extremely respectful.

"Same here! Are these the ones taking on the Yin-Yang Lake trial?"

Court Chief Wu asked as her gaze fell on the trio standing behind Pavilion Master Kang. Then, a frown appeared on her forehead, "Why are there three of them?"

"It's like these, these three are the most outstanding youths of my generation. I truly find myself unable to choose among them, so I decided to bring them all along. I hope

that court chief can make an exception and allow them all to challenge the trial for an opportunity to enter the Yin-Yang Lake," Pavilion Master Kang hurriedly explained.

"Pavilion master, you should know the rules of our Yin-Yang Lake. Two slots means two slots, no exceptions can be made!"

Court Chief Wu shook her hands grandly. She felt like a block of ice, as though nothing in the world could change her will.

"This... Alright then!"

Seeing the other party's determined expression, Pavilion Master Kang knew that it would be futile even if he were to push on. Thus, with a bitter smile, he shook his head and said, "May I know in what form the trial will be presented? I would like to allow my juniors to prepare themselves!"

"The trial is simple, they just have to walk out from my Room of Fire and Ice!" Court Chief Wu said nonchalantly.

"Room of Fire and Ice?" Pavilion Master Kang frowned in confusion.

"The Room of Fire and Ice is a tool our Glacier Plain Court uses to test one's capability. Similar to the Heart Inquisition Crystal, by dripping a drop of fresh blood on it, one's mind will be put under the agony of blazing flames and frigid ice. If one can endure the torture and find the exit within two hours, one would be deemed to have passed the test! Otherwise, it would be deemed as a failure, and they will be unqualified to enter the Yin-Yang Lake," Court Chief Wu explained.

Everyone nodded their head in understanding.

In truth, they didn't expect for the trial to be a test on their mental fortitude.

Such a test was more related to one's will rather than one's cultivation.

After explaining, Court Chief Wu said, "You should hurry up and select the two who are taking the trial!"

"There's no need for that. Ruohuan, you'll sit out of this one!" Pavilion Master Kang instructed.

"Yes..."

Ruohuan gongzi's face couldn't be any more bitter.

But even though he felt indignant, this was a decision made by his teacher. Thus, he could only nod his head in agreement.

The fundamental principle of a master teacher was to respect one's teacher. The commands of a teacher mustn't be disobeyed.

Just as he was depressed at having lost such a good opportunity, Zhang Shi's voice sounded, "Wait a moment!"

After which, he lifted his head to look at the lady in the center and said, "Court Chief Wu, may I know under what conditions can the three of us take on the trial?"

Hearing the interjection, Court Chief Wu frowned in displeasure, "Pavilion Master Kang, is this the junior that you brought here? How can a junior interrupt a conversation between seniors!"

"Zhang Shi..."

Not expecting the latter to suddenly speak up, Pavilion Master Kang hurriedly turned to the latter anxiously.

Even though it was a pity that not everyone would gain the opportunity to take on the trial, it was better than nothing. If they were to enrage the other party, it was likely that the opportunity could be taken away from them.

While Pavilion Master Kang held immense prestige in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, there was only one Glacier Plain Court throughout the entire Huanyu Empire. Before the head of the only Glacier Plain Court, not to mention, a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan expert, his position had indeed become insignificant.

Disregarding Pavilion Master Kang's anxious gaze, Zhang Xuan continued speaking nonchalantly.

"Age isn't what that determines one's position. Just because one is young, that doesn't mean he must be a junior. Similarly, an old person could have simply wasted his time away... How about this, Court Chief Wu, I'll grant you an opportunity... I'll provide you

guidance personally in exchange of an additional slot for the trial. What do you think of it?"

"What?"

Pavilion Master Kang and Ruohuan gongzi staggered; they nearly spurted blood.

It was clearly conveyed to them during the journey that they shouldn't utter anything unnecessary-Court Chief Wu wasn't an easy person to get along with...

Can't you see that even the pavilion master himself is treading very carefully around the other party?

To grant the other party an opportunity of your guidance... The heck! Let's put aside the fact that you've only just received your 4-star master teacher emblem, even Pavilion Master Kang, a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, is unqualified for such a matter!

After all, the other party was a true-blue Transcendent Mortal 5-dan expert! Regardless of whether it was her knowledge or experience, she was far superior to the rest of them here. For a fellow like you who have just barely reached Transcendent Mortal 2-dan to speak like that... Aren't you afraid of being pummeled to death?

"Guide me?"

As expected, after hearing those words, Court Chief Wu's eyebrows shot up and a powerful aura emanated from her, leaving all existences trembling before her presence, "You wish to guide me? And you call that giving me an opportunity?"

Ignoring the other party's fiery aura, Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

"Indeed. This opportunity will only come once so I advise you to grasp it firmly!"

Seeing how Zhang shi was getting more and more overboard, Ruohuan gongzi's lips twitched. He hurriedly sent a telepathic message to Zhao Ya in hopes that she could stop her teacher.

"Zhao Ya, you should mediate the situation..."

He knew that Zhang shi valued this student of his a lot, and perhaps, her words might

be effective against him.

"Alright!"

Nodding her head, Zhao Ya stepped forward, "Court Chief Wu, my teacher is right. This is a good opportunity that you shouldn't miss. Otherwise, you'll surely regret for life!"

"The heck..."

Ruohuan gongzi nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

Big sis, by mediation, I meant that you should stop your teacher... Why in the world are you persuading Court Chief Wu instead?

Not to mention, to say that the other party would regret for life...

Isn't your confidence in your teacher way off the charts?!

For a Transcendent Mortal 2-dan master teacher to speak to a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan expert in such a manner, not to mention, that complete lack of embarrassment when speaking those words...

How in the world are you teacher and disciple be so confident?

"You..."

Court Chief Wu was also about to explode from hearing those words. "Pavilion Master Kang, take your people and leave. Our Glacier Plain Court doesn't welcome such arrogant people!"

Chapter 550

Neither Male Nor Female

"Court Chief Wu, Zhang shi isn't as reckless as you think he is..."

Not expecting Zhang shi to drive the usually composed Court Chief Wu to the point that she was chasing them away, Pavilion Master Kang's lips twitched violently, and he was about to go insane.

Only he himself knew how far he had worked for these two slots. Yet, this fellow actually offended the other party as soon as he arrived...

Ignoring Pavilion Master Kang's explanation, Court Chief Wu bellowed loudly, "Send our guests off!"

Huala!

The few white-robed ladies who had brought them in walked forward and with menacing gazes, they said, "This way please!"

"Court Chief Wu..."

Pavilion Master Kang was still trying to salvage the situation when Zhang Xuan interrupted him, "Alright, Pavilion Master Kang. Why should you waste your time with this fellow who god knows what her gender is? Let's just leave."

Jiya!

Ruohuan gongzi's legs suddenly caved in, and he nearly collapsed to the ground.

Pavilion Master Kang also stood petrified on the spot.

He had known this Court Chief Wu for many years. Beautiful and elegant, the latter could leave many ladies embarrassed over their form... To actually say that 'god knows what her gender is' to such a person...

Even if the other party disagreed to giving them another slot, two was actually fine as well... And even if the other party chased them away, at the very least, they could still leave peacefully.

Yet, Zhang Shi just had to insult the other party. It would be a miracle if the other party didn't kill you on the spot...

Pavilion Master Kang quickly drove his zhenqi and stepped in front of Zhang Xuan. If Court Chief Wu were to make a move, even if it meant that he would sustain grievous wounds, he would ensure that the others could leave safely.

"What did you say?"

Not beyond expectations, Court Chief Wu's face turned livid as though steel, and rage seethed in her eyes. If looks could kill, Zhang Xuan would have been torn apart countless times.

"Stop feigning ignorance, shouldn't you understand what I am saying the clearest? Do you really need me to point it out?"

Even before this impending crisis, Zhang Xuan didn't panic at all. "If I'm not mistaken, the hair on certain parts of your body grow at a very rapid pace!"

Pu!

That comment dealt the final blow to Ruohuan gongzi. He nearly failed to catch his breath and died on the spot.

The heck!

Big brother, are you doing this intentionally?

It was already shameless of you to scold the other party for being neither a man nor a woman. And now, you are even talking about the other party's hair... No matter how long the other party's hair is, it is hidden beneath her clothes. How the heck does that concern you?

To speak such words in public, are you a hoodlum?

Besides, even if her hair grows at a rapid pace... How in the world can you tell?

What in the world are you using a master teacher's discernment ability for...

Pavilion Master Kang was currently undergoing the same shock as his student was going through. Thunder seemed to rumble ceaselessly in his head, and the zhenqi that he had just gathered nearly dissipated due to his shock.

He was the head of a Master Teacher Pavilion, one of the most esteemed experts in the Myriad Kingdom City... Yet now, it seemed as though he had accompanied this hoodlum here to provoke the head of the Glacier Field Court. Ah... his dignity and his honor...

His face warped in conflict, and at this moment, even the thought of suicide flashed across his mind.

But regardless, he was the one who brought Zhang shi here. No matter how absurd the other party's behavior was, he was still a member of the Master Teacher Pavilion. He couldn't simply give up on the other party just like that.

Gritting his teeth, Pavilion Master Kang was just preparing himself for the storm-like wrath of a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan expert when the raging Court Chief Wu's face suddenly paled. "H-how did you know?"

"Ah?"

Pavilion Master Kang's zhenqi really dissipated this time, and his entire body slackened weakly.

Zhang shi was actually spot on?

He said that Court Chief Wu was neither male nor female, and that her hair was growing rapidly on certain places... But not only did the other party didn't lash out, she even admitted to it?

Are my ears playing tricks on me or has Court Chief Wu gone mad?

"Simple. Despite the overwhelming yin nature of your body, many of your acupoints are exuding yang energy. Your gestures are that of a demure maiden, but your words are full of might."

As though knowing the other party would admit to it, there wasn't the slightest

surprise in Zhang Xuan's expression. "If I'm not mistaken, you must be suffering from a conflict of yin and yang in your body, and you are unable to balance the both of them! That is precisely the reason why you grew a moustache and beard, and your pores are getting thicker!"

"This..."

Court Chief Wu's body jolted.

The other party's words were spot-on! She was indeed suffering from a clash of yin and yang in her body. Over the past two years, she'd even begun growing a beard!

If not for her shaving it diligently every day to retain her honor, she would have long died from embarrassment from the mocking of others.

She thought that as long as she mediated the yin and yang energy within her carefully, she would be able to solve the problem. But who could've known that... as time passed, her condition only continued to worsen. In fact, her pores were even starting to become thicker.

This matter involved a lady's pride. Embarrassed, she didn't dare to find anyone to take a look at it. Never in the world did she expect this fellow to see through her affliction in a single glance.

How... in the world did he manage to see through it.

"By hair growing rapidly on certain parts of the body... you mean the beard?"

Seeing the trembling shocked Court Chief Wu, Pavilion Master Kang and Ruohuan gongzi widened their mouths in astonishment. At the same time, they wiped the sweat off their reddened faces.

When they heard about hair growing in certain parts of the body, their minds immediately thought of indecent stuff. After all, how could they have possibly imagined that a female would grow a beard?

"After being injured by searing sword qi, you thought that you are unable to bring out the fullest extent of the might of the 'Great Ancient Incursion Art'. Thus, you decided to switch to a yin nature cultivation technique instead. In the end, you failed to control the energies in your body properly and ended up in such a state. Even though you are

still able to suppress it with brute force at the moment, that will be unfeasible in the long run. Within three years, the situation will spiral beyond your control," Zhang Xuan said.

If the other party didn't execute a battle technique, he would be unable to utilize the Library of Heaven's Path and determine the exact specifics of the other party's condition. Even so, through the sharp discernment ability of the Eye of Insight, he was able to see that this Court Chief Wu shaved her beard on a daily basis.

As such, he was able to deduce that the other party was suffering from a conflict of yin and yang. Factoring in the previous problem that Pavilion Master Kang spoke of, it wasn't too difficult for him to deduce the cause of the affliction.

The Great Ancient Incursion Art centered around the concept of sharpness and burst power. It only allowed its user to launch three extremely powerful strikes before drying out. This was the reason why Zhang Xuan thought the patient was a male back then when he looked at the case study.

Therefore, he was rather surprised upon hearing Pavilion Master Kang calling the patient a 'she' then. Upon seeing Court Chief Wu at this moment, it wasn't too hard for him to tie things together.

She must have switched from the Great Ancient Incursion Art to a yin attribute technique, thus resulting in a clash of energy that she was unable to mediate between.

The best way to solve such a matter was to destroy one's foundation and start afresh... But as the strongest expert and the chief of the Glacier Plain Court, how could she bear to do so?

Thus, she tried to suppress the energy in hopes that the problem would die down soon. However, as time passed, the situation only worsened, and she found herself slowly losing control.

As for why Court Chief Wu, despite being a female, would choose to cultivate a yang attribute technique that was more suited for males, Zhang Xuan wasn't too sure either. However, he felt that it might be related to the Yin-Yang Lake.

After all, the red-robed ladies that he had seen previously were all cultivating yang attribute cultivation techniques as well.

After hearing those words, while Pavilion Master Kang and Ruohuan gongzi felt that it was a little far-fetched, Court Chief Wu's face turned ghastly white.

The other party's analysis was spot-on.

Back then, even though she was treated by Pavilion Master Kang, there were some side effects to the treatment. For one, she found herself unable to fully unleash the might of the Great Ancient Incursion Art anymore. Thus, she changed to a yin nature cultivation technique instead in hopes of using it to achieve a breakthrough, as well as to neutralize the lingering searing sword qi in her body.

And due to that, she improved swiftly. It didn't take her long to neutralize the sword qi and recover fully from her wounds.

But... that also left behind a trauma in her, thus resulting in the current situation.

"May I know if there is any... treatment method for it?"

Since the other party could see through it, perhaps he would be able to solve it. Thus, Court Chief Wu couldn't help but look at the other party expectantly.

"There's indeed some ways to treat your affliction. The most direct method is to dissipate your cultivation and start anew!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Dissipate my cultivation... That won't work. My lifespan is already beyond a hundred now. If I were to dissipate my cultivation, I'd surely die from old age instantly," Court Chief Wu hurriedly said.

It was not that she had never thought of this method before.

But given her current age, without her cultivation sustaining her bodily functions, she would immediately age swiftly and die in less than three days.

What was the use of treating her affliction if she were to die because of it?

If so, she might as well just persevere on with the current situation.

Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

The other party's words were indeed true.

The extended lifespan of a Transcendent Mortal came from the augmentation of their cultivation. If their cultivation were to disappear, they would immediately revert back to ordinary lifespan of a human.

"Is there any other solution?" Court Chief Wu asked.

"That... How about this, you execute a punching routine for me so that I can analyze your condition... However, I can't guarantee you that I'll be able to find a solution."

Zhang Xuan shook his hands.

While he had a rough idea of what the other party's affliction was, without the Library of Heaven's Path accurately pointing out the specific causes resulting in the other party's current condition, he wasn't too sure how the problem could be treated.

Naturally, he wouldn't be able to guarantee whether he could treat the other party's affliction either.

After hesitating for a moment, Court Chief Wu nodded her head.

"Alright. Regardless of whether Zhang Shi is able to treat my affliction or not, I promise to grant you a third slot for the trial!"

She was about to go insane being tortured by her current condition as she saw more and more characteristics of a male appearing on her every day.

If the person before her could really treat her affliction, she would be willing to pay anything without hesitation, let alone, a single slot for the trial.

"Un!"

Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

In the end, the reason why he went through so much trouble was to obtain that additional slot. Since the other party had given him her word, naturally, he had to give his all in his treatment as well.

"Just like that... he succeeded?"

It was just a moment ago that Court Chief Wu seemed as though she would tear all of

them apart. Yet, at this very instant, not only did her rage fade completely, she even promised to give them the slot. Pavilion Master Kang was dumbfounded.

Wasn't he way too formidable!

Even though he was seeing this for himself, he still found the situation hard to believe.

On the other hand, Ruohuan gongzi was about to be driven insane from shock.

All along, he felt that luck had been a huge factor in why he lost to the other party in the selection round. He thought that as long as he cultivated hard, it wouldn't be impossible for him to turn the situation around two months later, thus reclaiming the title of the number one genius of Myriad Kingdom Alliance.

It was only after this incident that he realized that... the other party's eye of discernment and meticulousness toward details weren't things that he could compete with!

In fact... even his own teacher seemed to be unable to match up to Zhang shi!

This fellow... Was he really a person who had just qualified as a 4-star master teacher?

Unaware of the doubts in Ruohuan gongzi's mind, Zhang Xuan turned to Court Chief Wu and waved his hands.

"Let's begin then!"

"Alright!"

Nodding her head, Court Chief Wu whipped out her arm and executed a powerful punch.

Zhang Xuan's eyes were fixated on the other party's movements, but in truth, his consciousness was in the Library of Heaven's Path. He was busy flipping through the book to look through the details of the other party's affliction.

Hu!

Soon, Court Chief Wu finished her display and turned her gaze to Zhang Xuan. "Are there any way... to treat my affliction?"

As she spoke those words, her breathing couldn't help but hasten.

If even the young man before her was unable to treat her affliction, she really couldn't imagine what kind of terrors awaited her in the future and how she could endure them.

"This... There's indeed a solution to your problem!"

Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xuan looked at Court Chief Wu with a bizarre expression and asked, "What do you think of our Pavilion Master Kang?"

"Ah?"

Court Chief Wu was stunned.

Chapter 551

Zhang Xuan's Shady Dealing [2in1]

I asked you for a solution to my problem, why are you suddenly asking me about Pavilion Master Kang?

But even though Court Chief Wu was perplexed, knowing that this was probably related to the treatment, she replied earnestly, "I've known Pavilion Master Kang for many years, so I guess we can be considered to be familiar with one another."

Standing by the side, Kang Gan was already bewildered. He had no idea what Zhang Shi was thinking of.

"Since the you are familiar with him, that should make things simple!"

With a bright smile on his face, Zhang Xuan continued, "Our pavilion master is a righteous and honest person. On top of that, he's a master teacher, so he has a bright future ahead of him. More importantly... his looks are above average as well..."

The more Zhang Xuan spoke, the more confused Court Chief Wu became. Bewildered, she asked, "Pavilion Master Kang is indeed a fine man. For the welfare of the Master Teacher Pavilion, he was willing to pay a heavy price just to obtain the slots to enter the Yin-Yang Lake for his juniors... Just that, what does this have to do with treating my conflict of yin and yang?"

"This had everything to do with it!"

Zhang Xuan's eyes rotated between the two parties involved and said, "Why don't the both of you... get married?"

Pu!

Pavilion Master Kang choked on his own saliva and nearly fainted over. Ruohuan gongzi also widened his eyes in shock.

Aren't you trying to treat Court Chief Wu? Why does it seem like you're matchmaking

instead?

To dare to propose a matrimony between Pavilion Master Kang and Court Chief Wu...
You sure are brave...

"Marry?"

Court Chief Wu's body shook, and her vision went dark. She had only asked this fellow to treat her... how in the world did it turn into a talk about marriage instead?

What the heck does the other party mean by trying to get me to marry Pavilion Master Kang?

"That's right. There is no problem with you cultivating a forceful yang cultivation technique. The main issue lies in you changing your cultivation technique halfway through, resulting in a collision between yin and yang. The best way to completely cure you of your affliction is to find a spouse whose cultivation is around your level and possesses outstanding control over zhenqi to mediate the yin and yang within your body!"

Zhang Xuan continued, "As a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert, Pavilion Master Kang is just a step away from reaching Consonant Spirit realm. On top of that, he is a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, and his knowledge and control over zhenqi is superior even when compared to yours. Thus... he is the most ideal candidate in mind! If the two of you get together, in just three to six months, you will be able to completely neutralize the yin and yang energy in your body and make a complete recovery!"

"This..."

Court Chief Wu was stunned.

She didn't expect for her situation to be able to be solved in such a manner.

Ever since she started cultivating, she had been guarding her purity closely. She never tried to get close to any men, and she didn't allow any men to get close to her either. For her to marry someone so abruptly... Even if it was to treat her physical affliction, she still found it hard to accept.

While she was still hesitating, Pavilion Master Kang hurriedly said, "Are there no other solutions? This... won't work!"

Even though he was still single... how could he accept marrying a bearded beauty?

Just the thought of the other party's beard growing even more diligently than his made his goosebumps stand on ends.

"Of course there are other solutions, but this is the simplest one!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Let's use the other solutions then. As long as it's within my means, I'll definitely give my all..." Pavilion Master Kang hurriedly said. However, before he could finish his words, a vicious glare fell on him and a cold voice sounded.

"Kang Gan, what do you mean? For you to turn down a marriage with me so hurriedly, are you hinting that I am unworthy of you?"

Even if it was to treat her affliction, she didn't want to marry this old man either. But... even if the marriage didn't go through, she should be the one rejecting the other party! For this old man to quickly reject her as though he had stepped on something disgusting, what the heck did he mean by that?

Am I that repulsive?

In terms of cultivation, as a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan, I am way superior to you. In terms of standing, as the only head of Glacier Plain Court throughout the entire Huanyu Empire, there are countless pavilion masters wanting to fawn over me. In terms of appearance, even though there are others that are more beautiful than me, I am at least a 'one in ten thousand' beauty. Even though I'm no longer in my youth, my beauty still lingers on...

I haven't even agreed to the marriage yet, what rights do you have to be rejecting me so anxiously?

"Court Chief Wu, you must be jesting. How could I dare to harbor such thoughts? I just think that..."

Not expecting the other party to fault him over this matter, Pavilion Master Kang's lips twitched, "...I am unworthy of you! I am the one who is unworthy of you!"

"It's good that you have some self-awareness!"

Hearing those words, Court Chief Wu's expression finally softened. Turning to the

young man before her once more, she said, "What other ways are there? As long as it's within my means, I'll definitely give my all!"

"..."

Pavilion Master Kang was rendered speechless. Wasn't that exactly what I said? If not for you interrupting the conversation, we could have progressed much faster than that...

"There's another way to do so. That's to find an expert with Pure Yin Body whose cultivation is on par with you. You can make use of her blood to neutralize the remaining yang energy within your body. You don't need too much of it, just one drop is sufficient," Zhang Xuan said.

"Pure Yin Body?"

Court Chief Wu smiled bitterly.

Unique constitutions were like a grain of sand amidst a gigantic ocean. If it was that easy to possess a unique constitution, everyone would have been an expert by now.

The reason why their Origin Flame Glacier Plain had been training their members in yang attribute and yin attribute cultivation techniques, even going to the extent of creating the Yin-Yang Lake, was just so to groom a cultivator with the Pure Yang Body or Pure Yin Body...

But after so many years, there hadn't been a single success yet.

Besides, even if they were successful, that person would surely have been taken away by the headquarters already. To find such a person to cure her affliction was nigh impossible.

"This... Since it won't work, why don't... Pavilion Master Kang and I get married?" Court Chief Wu proposed hesitantly with an awful complexion.

Hearing the bearded lady's intention to marry her, Pavilion Master Kang nearly fainted on the spot. He hurriedly shouted, "N-no need for that. Isn't there a person with Pure Yin Body here?"

"There is?"

Court Chief Wu was taken aback. "Where?"

There might not even be the birth of a person with this unique constitution over the span of a millennia, so how could such an expert be found so easily?

"Zhang Shi's student, Zhao Ya, is a person possessing the Pure Yin Body. On top of that, she has even awakened it by twenty percent already..."

Afraid that the other party would lay her thoughts on him, Pavilion Master Kang hurriedly said, "You... possess the Pure Yin Body?"

Narrowing her eyes, Court Chief Wu hurriedly assessed the girl before her.

"Yes, she possesses the Pure Yin Body. There's no mistake about it!"

After saying so, Pavilion Master Kang hurriedly turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "Since your student possesses the Pure Yin Body and a single droplet of her blood can solve the court chief's affliction, why would you propose for the both of us to get married..."

This Zhang Shi was truly... Since the second method was that simple, why would he propose for the both of them to get married?

"Zhao Ya is my student. I have the responsibility to protect her from any harm. Naturally, I've no choice but to sacrifice you. Besides, I'm doing you a huge favor by helping you find a wife. Tsk, for my goodwill to go unreciprocated..." Zhang Xuan replied.

Pavilion Master Kang staggered.

To protect your student, you actually decided to sacrifice me...

And you still dare to say that you are doing me a favor...

Goodwill your head!

Why don't you try marrying a bearded lady yourself?!

While the duo was arguing, Court Chief Wu was slowly walking to Zhao Ya with a body trembling in disbelief. "You... really possess the Pure Yin Body?"

"Yes!"

Zhao Ya's eyebrows shot up. Driving the zhenqi in her body, the characteristics of her constitution immediately appeared. A surge of cold air blew into the hall, gushing toward the skies.

As her cultivation reached Half-Transcension, the powers of her unique constitution were gradually drawn out. With her current strength, there was no one of equal cultivation realm as her that could defeat her, not even master teachers. Most probably, only a monster like Zhang Xuan could match her on equal grounds.

"Indeed... She possesses the Pure Yin Body... There's hope for our Origin Flame Glacier Plain..."

Feeling the powerful aura exuded from Zhao Ya, Court Chief Wu's eyes reddened. She rushed forward to grab Zhao Ya's arm and asked, "What's your name?"

"Zhao Ya!"

Seeing the normal Court Chief Wu suddenly behaving so frenziedly, Zhao Ya frowned and pushed her hand aside.

"Zhao Ya xiaojie... do you want to go to the headquarters with me? As long as you agree to it, you'll be granted the best cultivation resource immediately. You'll be able to awaken your Pure Yin Body completely in the shortest time possible, thus becoming the strongest expert across the entire continent swiftly..." Court Chief Wu said in agitation.

"There's no need for it. I wish to follow behind my teacher," Zhao Ya replied nonchalantly.

It was due to Zhang Shi's guidance that she had been able to come so far. The other party's position in her heart was already comparable to that of her own father, and he was the person she respected the most in the world. It was impossible for her to leave him on her own accord.

"Teacher? Who is your teacher?"

Due to her agitation, Court Chief Wu was a little muddle-headed at the moment.

"It is Zhang Xuan, Zhang shi!" Zhao Ya said proudly.

"Zhang shi?"

Only then did Court Chief Wu finally come to a realization. She hurriedly turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "Zhang shi, can you... lend your student to our Origin Flame Glacier Plain? We truly require a Pure Yin Body expert..."

"Lend?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "My students are thinking humans. They can decide on their own. If they wish to follow you, I'll support them with all my heart. If they are unwilling to do so, no one will be able to force them into a decision!"

Even though Zhang Xuan's voice was calm, it carried immense confidence.

As the owner of the Library of Heaven's Path, he was destined to walk a path different from the others. Even though he might be weak at the moment, he had the confidence to grow stronger in the shortest time possible. As long as Zhao Ya was unwilling to accept the other party's request, Zhang Xuan would not allow anyone to force her into it.

Hearing the other party's confident words, Court Chief Wu recovered from her agitation and hurriedly shook her head.

"That... is not what I mean. Zhang shi, please don't misunderstand my intentions!"

"Why don't you tell us what is going on?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Through his eye of discernment, he could tell that Court Chief Wu's agitation was for real.

She didn't even react so intensely when she heard that there was a cure for her affliction. Most probably, there was something much deeper to the matter.

On top of that, she even said something along the lines of 'there was hope for the Origin Flame Glacier Plain'.

"This... I apologize but it concerns the utmost secret of our Origin Flame Glacier Field, so I'm unable to tell you anything further than this..."

With a conflicted expression, Court Chief Wu hesitated for a moment before saying,

"How about this, I'll consult with the headquarters about this matter while you enter the Yin-Yang Lake. Regardless of the reply of the headquarters, I'll give you an explanation for this matter."

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

Every single occupation had their secrets and privacy. It was normal for the other party to have some things she was unwilling to reveal.

Changing the subject, Court Chief Wu asked, "Just to confirm, the three slots should refer to the three of you, right?"

"Yes. Me, Ruohuan gongzi, and Zhao Ya." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Good. The Room of Ice and Fire is right ahead. Only after passing the trial can you enter the Yin-Yang Lake!"

Court Chief Wu explained, "The reason why we have the trial is due to the bizarre nature of the Yin-Yang Lake. The amalgamation of yin and yang can create huge stress on one's body, putting them in immense pain. If one couldn't even endure the Room of Ice and Fire, one might end up being seared to ash by the flow of yang energy or frozen into an ice block by the flow of yin energy in the Yin-Yang Lake."

"I see."

Zhang Xuan nodded.

He was wondering why they still had to undergo the trial despite everything that had happened. This seemed to be the true reason behind it all.

It was just like how one had to be administered suspect penicillin before the real injection. Otherwise, one might die from the inability to adapt in the Yin-Yang Lake.

As such, the trial was, in truth, a preventive measure to assess one's ability beforehand.

Walking up to the entrance of the Room of Ice and Fire, Zhang Xuan assessed the interior of the room. It was somewhat similar to the House of Trust he had entered during the master teacher examination in Tianwu Kingdom.

"Who wants to give it a try first?" Court Chief Wu asked with a smile.

"Me..."

Hearing those words, Ruohuan gongzi quickly rushed forward anxiously.

After several rounds of competing with Zhang Xuan, he had finally understood a fact. If he were to allow the latter go first, putting aside how all of his glory would be stolen from him, he might even wreck the entire area...

After all, his history with Elder Wu, Elder Yun, and Elder Bai spoke a lot... Regardless, one thing was for sure-Zhang Xuan shouldn't be allowed to go first.

This was a safety precaution.

Rather than dealing with the possible problems in his aftermath, he might as well be the first to clear the trial.

At the very least, he could still retain a little bit of confidence.

Seeing the other party volunteering so actively, Court Chief Wu nodded her head and instructed, "Drip of a droplet of blood on the crystal outside the door before entering!"

"Yes!"

Walking up to the crystal, Ruohuan gongzi bit his finger, dripped a drop of blood on it, before walking into the room.

As soon as he walked in, rumbling sounds reminiscent of thunder began echoing ceaselessly. It was hard to imagine what kind of terrors were occurring inside.

Court Chief Wu seemed to have known this would happen, and she was standing quietly by the side with her hands behind her back.

Jiya!

After an unknown period of time, a charred figure walked out of the room. His hair was standing at ends, and black smoke was rising from his body. Who else could this be other than Ruohuan gongzi?

At the current moment, Jun Ruohuan bore no resemblance to the dashing gentleman he usually was. Instead, he seemed like a beggar who had just climbed out from a

rubbish dump. With a body completely charred, he was in an extremely miserable state.

"Even though his mental fortitude had been breached, given how he was able to clear the test within two hours, his foundations are still quite strong. Alright, you are qualified to enter the Yin-Yang Lake!"

Glancing at the bit of incense still burning outside the room, Court Chief Wu nodded her head.

Even though Ruohuan gongzi had stayed inside for nearly two entire hours, he was still able to leave within the allotted time. On top of that, he still retained his consciousness. This showed that he possessed outstanding endurance and perseverance. With these, he was qualified to enter the Yin-Yang Lake.

"Didn't Court Chief Wu say that the Room of Ice and Fire is a test of one's mental resilience? Why would..." Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

"The Room of Ice and Fire is indeed a trial on one's mental resilience. However, if one's mental fortitude is breached, one's physical body will incur injuries as well. Even so, to be able to walk out under such conditions, that person must possess outstanding endurance."

After explaining, Court Chief Wu turned to look at Zhang Xuan. "Zhang shi, are you going in next, or is Zhao Ya going?"

"Allow me!" Zhao Ya stepped forward.

With the same procedures from before, Zhao Ya entered the room. However, in just an hour later, she was already done. Seeing this sight, Ruohuan gongzi fell into depression, and internally, he was shouting 'monster'.

One must know that Zhao Ya's age and cultivation was way beneath his.

Of course, this trial didn't mean that Zhao Ya's capability was above that of Ruohuan gongzi. Rather, the Pure Yin Body granted Zhao Ya immunity to the cold and a form of defense against the heat... This trial might have been difficult for most cultivator, but for her, it wasn't anything much.

As such, even though Zhao Ya's condition was slightly unkempt when she walked out,

she was in a much better state than Ruohuan gongzi.

"It's my turn!"

Since the other two had cleared, Zhang Xuan followed the same procedures as before and walked into the room.

...

Seeing Zhang Xuan walk into the room, Ruohuan gongzi asked, "Teacher, how long do you think Zhang shi will take?"

"Since you took around two hours and Zhao Ya around an hour, I think that Zhang shi... should be able to clear the challenge in less than fifteen minutes!" Pavilion Master Kang said.

That fellow had created too many miracles. Since even his student was able to clear the trial in an hour, most probably, he wouldn't even take half of the time.

"Fifteen minutes?"

Ruohuan gongzi shook his head, "I think he would only take a maximum of five minutes!"

Ruohuan gongzi had a very deep impression of the latter's monstrous capability. Every time he thought it was impossible for the other party to succeed, the other party would do so in a manner that exceeded their expectations.

Taking this situation for example, in truth, he also shared his teacher's thoughts that the other party would be able to complete the challenge within fifteen minutes. But... for some reason, his subconscious made him feel that the result would be even more frightening than his estimates.

"Five minutes?" Hearing the conversation between the duo, Court Chief Wu shook her head.

That was the Room of Ice and Fire, an extremely fearsome trial. Clearing it within five minutes? Surely you two must be dreaming!

"Court Chief Wu, you simply don't understand how fearsome Zhang shi is... In truth,

I'm thinking that five minutes might be an underestimation..." Ruohuan gongzi explained.

"Is he that incredible?"

Hearing this talented master teacher declaring the matter so confidently, Court Chief Wu's opinion wavered.

That Zhang shi did indeed see through a problem that escape Pavilion Master Kang's eyes, and honestly speaking, there was something bizarre about him. Perhaps, he really might be able to accomplish the unthinkable.

"Indeed. Let's wait and see then!"

Ruohuan gongzi said so with a confidence even greater than that when he challenged the trial.

"Five minutes have passed..."

It didn't take long for five minutes to pass, but the room didn't seem to be opening any time soon.

"Perhaps... ten minutes..."

With an awkward expression, Ruohuan gongzi changed his words.

But after ten minutes had passed, the room still remain sealed.

"Could it be... fifteen minutes?" Having two of his guesses fail, Ruohuan gongzi uttered doubtfully.

But... a pity it was, but after fifteen minutes had passed, not a figure emerged from the shut doors.

Thirty minutes!

Fifty minutes!

Eighty minutes...

...

Soon, two hours passed but the Room of Ice and Fire remained bizarrely quiet.

"The time has ended but the other party isn't out yet... Seems like he failed to clear the trial!"

Court Chief Wu shook her head in lamentation.

She thought that the young man would create a miracle just as the others had said. But from the situation, it seemed like they were overestimating him.

Not only did the latter fail to create a miracle, he didn't even pass the trial.

"He failed..." Ruohuan gongzi muttered with a face warped as though it was suffering from constipation.

Every time he doubted that fellow, the other party would immediately make a comeback and prove him wrong. This time, he announced his trust in the other party's ability to achieve an outstanding result... But in the end, he failed?

Zhang shi, are you intentionally trying to oppose everything I've said...

Clutching his chest, Ruohuan gongzi felt a stifling sensation in his chest.

Pavilion Master Kang's body also shuddered. He was on the verge of crying.

Zhang shi had fared so well in the Master Teacher Hall, why would he suddenly fail here?

What in the world... happened inside?

...

Going back to two hours ago, when Zhang Xuan just entered the room...

Beyond the room was a long passageway that seemingly stretched to the ends of the world.

Hong long!

As soon as the door closed, Zhang Xuan immediately felt stifling heat assaulting him from all directions. It was as if he had accidentally walked into an incinerator.

Driving the Heaven's Path zhenqi, he turned his gaze backward and frowned.

The door which had just shut on its own accord actually disappeared from view, as though it had never existed from the start.

"Do I have to walk through the entire passageway to leave?"

Zhang Xuan frowned.

Could this Room of Ice and Fire actually be a formidable formation? And the only way to leave it is to walk to the end of the passageway?

Slightly doubtful, Zhang Xuan proceeded forward.

Xiong xiong!

But right after taking a few steps, the heat seemed to intensify. A sea of flames appeared in the surroundings, and there was no way to avoid it if Zhang Xuan wanted to proceed any further.

"Forget it, I should continue heading forward!"

Even after walking around the area, Zhang Xuan was still unable to find the exit. Thus, he decided to proceed forward.

The Heaven's Path zhenqi was extraordinarily powerful. Despite the searing heat scorching his skin, it was unable to hurt him at all.

Just as Zhang Xuan was standing right before the flames, ready to step over it, his eyes suddenly blurred, and in an instant, it was as if he had stepped into a field of ice. Piercing chill penetrated his bones and spread across his body via his meridians, causing him to shudder involuntarily.

He was on the verge of being reduced to an ice block.

As a Transcendent Mortal expert, under normal circumstances, even if he were to sleep in an ice vault, as long as he had zhenqi to protect his body, he wouldn't feel cold

in the least. But at the current moment, he was shivering involuntarily. This was an extremely eerie situation.

Driving his zhenqi to ward off the cold, Zhang Xuan thought, 'It's no wonder Ruohuan gongzi was in such a terrible state when he exited. He probably suffered greatly under the torture of the alternating flames and ice... '

While Transcendent Mortal experts had the ability to ward off the effects of one's environment, but still... an abrupt steep change in temperature would still be hard to tolerate.

It was just like how one could tolerate having one's hand being plunged into a bowl of cold water, but if one were to put one's hand in a bowl of warm water before that, the huge contrast in the temperature would be difficult to bear.

Just as Zhang Xuan was able to proceed ahead, a thought suddenly appeared in his mind.

'Fire and ice... No, it can't be a formation. Even a 4-star pinnacle formation is incapable of such might.'

Even a 4-star pinnacle formation would be incapable of the abrupt steep change in temperature that occurred in this Room of Ice and Fire. But if that was the case, how in the world was this trial created?

'Besides, I didn't sense the movement in spiritual energy before entering. If there's a formation here, I would have surely sensed it... '

As a 4-star formation master, if there was a formation here, even though he hadn't tried using the Eye of Insight, he would have noticed it. Given the alternating fire and ice despite the lack of formation...

There must be something much deeper to the trial. At the very least, it wasn't as simple as simply walking through the corridor.

Furthermore, Court Chief Wu had said previously that this was a test of one's mental fortitude, and that Ruohuan gongzi's mental fortitude had been breached. This left him even more perplexed.

"I should see what's going on... Eye of Insight!"

With such doubts in mind, Zhang Xuan activated the Eye of Insight.

Hu!

A dazzling radiance glowed in the surroundings, and several lines of insight surfaced in his eyes.

After taking a brief look, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"It's indeed a test of one's mental fortitude... My soul and consciousness has been brought into an illusion!"

Through the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan finally made sense of the happenings.

The fire and ice that appeared before him weren't real; it was just an illusion.

It was just like the crystals in the House of Trust-through one's blood, it created illusions that made one feel as though one was braving through a land of flames and ice. Those who succumbed to it would be permanently trapped within it. No one could save them.

The Eye of Insight had the ability to see through falsehood. Despite how realistic the illusion was, under Zhang Xuan's sharp eyes, it still revealed its true nature. In truth, the exit from before was still at the same place, and his physical body was standing motionlessly at the center of the room. The interchanging heat and chill that he was experiencing at the moment wouldn't hurt him at all.

That was to say, the pain and torture he had just felt was an assault on his consciousness.

"To possess such means without the use of a formation, the Glacier Plain Court is indeed impressive!"

After taking another look, he confirmed that this wasn't a formation. But still, to be able to generate effects similar to a formation, the Room of Ice and Fire wasn't as simple as it looked.

It was just like the traps from celestial designer that he had seen in the soul oracle tomb back then.

There were some non-formation master occupations that could create things that was in no way inferior to a formation.

Otherwise, it would have been impossible for them to create their own heritage and pass it on for innumerable years without declining.

"There must be something here that is affecting my consciousness, causing me to perceive the interchanging heat and chill!"

Even though it wasn't a formation, a lifelike illusion of this level that made one unable to discern one's soul from one's body definitely had to be powered by some powerful artifact or unique energy.

"Flaws!"

After understanding the situation, Zhang Xuan brought his consciousness back into his physical body, and went around touching the wall and the ground in the Room of Ice and Fire.

Not too long later, a book surfaced in his mind.

"I see..."

After reading through the content, Zhang Xuan smiled in understanding.

"Origin Flame Ice Plain, a bizarre phenomenon created by the overlapping of an Origin Fire and an Ice Plain... Going by the directions, it should be somewhere here!"

After measuring the room, Zhang Xuan walked to a certain location and tapped on several parts.

Kacha!

As the mechanical trap whirled into action, a huge hole appeared before Zhang Xuan's view.

It was like a pitch-black abyss, and its depth was inestimable.

"I should go down to take a look!"

Facing this hole of unknown depth, others might be hesitant to proceed downward. However, possessing the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, Zhang Xuan had no such worries.

Leaping downward into the abyss, Zhang Xuan's body fell swiftly. After a moment of freefall, Zhang Xuan activated the Heaven Ascending Steps momentarily to slow his falling speed. Repeating the process several times, Zhang Xuan fell several thousand meters before stepping on solid ground once more.

This underground cavern was extremely vast, and it was impossible to see its ends with just a single glance. A huge lake of a radius of two meters stood right before him. However, the lake had an extremely bizarre appearance; half of it was flowing with lava whereas the other half had ice floating on it.

He thought that the liveliness of the spiritual energy was already amazing in the hall above, but here, under the effects of the lake, the spiritual energy in the surrounding was several times that of the hall.

'Could this be the Yin-Yang Lake?' Zhang Xuan thought.

Chapter 552

Court Chief Wu Making a Move

It couldn't be that this was the Yin-Yang Lake, could it?

If that wasn't the case, how could there be such a bizarre thing?

But if that was the case... Why was it that small?

With just a radius of two meters, it would already be extremely cramped for one to enter it.

After all, cultivating wasn't bathing. There was no cultivator who would be willing to let their guards down before another at such proximity to cultivate.

If the Yin-Yang Lake was only this big, there was no reason why the Glacier Plain Court would be so famous.

Not to mention, it didn't match with how they had so many powerful disciples who were cultivating yin and yang cultivation techniques.

"I should take a look to see what's happening first..."

Walking forward, Zhang Xuan touched the surface of the lake lightly.

Hu!

A book appeared in his hand.

"Origin Flame Glacier Plain Seed Water. Created by members of Origin Flame Glacier Plain by fusing the Origin Flames created by sealing the earth veins with unique material [Glacier Plain]. It is an extremely rare material. Flaws: 1, it requires specialists to sustain it or else it'll be damaged very easily..."

There were many things written in the book.

Soon, Zhang Xuan finished reading through the book.

"Turns out it isn't the Yin-Yang Lake... I thought that I'd found it."

Zhang Xuan shook his head in disappointment.

From the looks of it, the Yin-Yang Lake probably couldn't be found that easily. After all, it was the most important resource of the Frigid Plain Court so how could outsiders get access to it so easily? Not to mention, this underground chamber wasn't guarded at all.

Based on the description from the Library of Heaven's Path, this [Origin Flame Glacier Plain Seed Water] was made by the members of the Glacier Plain Court fusing Origin Flame with Ice Plain.

Initially, Zhang Xuan thought that Ice Plain referred to a land harnessing the power of ice. However, from the looks of it now, it seemed to be the name of a unique material, just like the Origin Flame.

"Pavilion Master Kang said that this land used to be a volcano before it became a land of ice... This should probably be the reason behind it."

On the way here, Pavilion Master Kang had told them some details regarding the Origin Flame Glacier Field.

This place used to be a searing sea of flames, a place uninhabitable even to the most resilient of weeds.

The members of the Glacier Plain Court had changed the entire landscape into a land of snow.

And if Zhang Xuan wasn't mistaken, it was most probably the doing of this small lake.

The small lake had sealed the heat energy in the earth vein through the Ice Plain, resulting in the inability for heat to disperse in the region. Given the height of the mountain, it was just a matter of time before snow filled its entire terrain.

It was just like if someone were to seal the heat of the burning lava through some means, as time passed, the temperature in the region would naturally fall.

A thought suddenly emerged in Zhang Xuan's mind.

'Given how this item is capable of creating illusions, it must have a certain degree of effect on one's soul. What if... my soul were to enter the lake?'

Even though this wasn't the Yin-Yang Lake, there was one thing he could confirm-this lake had an effect on a cultivator's soul. Given the huge amount of energy harnessed within the pool... Was it possible for his soul to be tempered by the energy within?

"Let me give it a try!"

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan immediately got down to business. In any case, this was part of the trial, so he wasn't really causing any trouble anyway.

Sitting down on the ground, Zhang Xuan immediately drew his soul out, and his soul headed for the lake.

Tzzzzz!

As soon as he entered, the surge of cold and heat immediately assaulted him, making his soul feel as though it had been plunged into a pot of burning oil and a river of freezing water simultaneously, placing him under great agony.

But at the same time, his soul became stronger and more tangible.

"Not bad!"

Zhang Xuan nodded his head in satisfaction.

The soul cultivation technique he was using was the Heaven's Path Soul Art. This made his soul exceptionally resilient, fearing neither yin or yang, thus allowing him to devour such overwhelming power. If it was any other soul oracle, their soul would have already dissipated from the heat in the water.

In fact... this didn't just apply to soul oracles. Even bodies of Consonant Spirit realm expert would easily crumble before this simultaneous assault of heat and chill.

Unlike the body, the soul is intangible. It wouldn't expand or contract when in contact with heat or chill, which would make a material very fragile.

As such, Zhang Xuan was the only one who could make use of this precious resource to train his soul. No one else in the world would be able to do the same.

"Absorb..."

Understanding this fact, Zhang Xuan chuckled as his soul swallowed both the yin and yang energy in the water.

Driving the Heaven's Path Soul Art to the maximum, Zhang Xuan's cultivation soared furiously.

Kacha!

The sound of a wall breaking down sounded. In just a few breaths, Zhang Xuan's soul cultivation had increased from Transcendent Mortal 2-dan pinnacle to Transcendent Mortal 3-dan primary stage.

But still, his cultivation showed no sign of stopping. On the contrary, he seemed to be absorbing the energy even faster.

Transcendent Mortal 3-dan primary stage!

3-dan intermediate stage!

3-dan advanced stage!

...

Absorbing the yin and yang energy in the lake, Zhang Xuan's cultivation surged swiftly, a fold faster than the pace his zhenqi cultivation usually progressed.

"This lake is the amalgamation of yin and yang, the collision of heat and chill. This is sligned with the Heaven's Path Soul Art, thus hastening the rate of my cultivation..."

Zhang Xuan also understood the underlying principle behind this sight.

The single origin conceives two, two conceives three, and three conceives all.

The Heaven's Path cultivation techniques were created by putting countless formulas together, and it contained the utmost truth of the world. On the other hand, the lake

before him represented the amalgamation of yin and yang in the world...

It was due to the two factors in harmony with one another that his cultivation speed had been boosted significantly.

But in truth, this increase in rate of cultivation wasn't too useful to him.

After all, the main problem he had at hand was the lack of spirit stone. Even if he were to absorb spiritual energy from a spirit stone instead, he could easily achieve a breakthrough within two hours. Cutting it down by half into one hour didn't make much of a difference.

So, it wasn't as effective as it sounded.

But still, this was due to his cultivation technique being too overpowered. If anyone else could raise their rate of cultivation by twofold, they would probably be smiling in their sleep.

Hong long!

After an unknown period of time, Zhang Xuan's soul trembled before he stopped his cultivation.

Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle... reached!

In less than two hours, his soul cultivation had increased by Transcendent Mortal 2-dan pinnacle to Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle. That was two whole realms!

Upon making the breakthrough to Transcendent Mortal 4-dan Clarifying Turbidity realm, one's strength would raise from 800,000 ding to 1,000,000 ding.

Every single tier would mean an increase of strength by 200,000 ding. In other words, having reached 4-dan pinnacle, the strength that Zhang Xuan could derive from his soul added up to more than 1,600,000 ding!

Factoring the 400,000 ding from his zhenqi, that would mean Zhang Xuan's strength was currently standing at 2,000,000 ding! Even Pavilion Master Kang wouldn't be a match for him!

That was how powerful he was at the moment!

Zhang Xuan never expected that his cultivation would increase by so much in less than two hours.

But still, given that the soul oracles had already disappeared from the face of the world, it was best for Zhang Xuan to avoid using this power.

Otherwise, all kinds of trouble might end up coming his way. This could prove to be extremely troublesome.

"Time to return!"

Now that Zhang Xuan's soul cultivation had reached its cap, he stopped his cultivation and his soul dived back into the body. Then, he stood up.

Taking a look at the lake before him, the lake which showed a sight of the amalgamation of yin and yang before had disappeared altogether. At the current moment, it was no different from a normal lake. The yin and yang energy it harnessed before had been completely sapped dry by him.

Zhang Xuan's soul was twofold larger than that of an ordinary Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle soul oracle. As a soul, his height was more than a single zhang (3.33m) tall, and even two ordinary humans stacked together would be unable to match up to his size.

"Two hours have already passed. I should leave the room now!"

Making a rough calculation, Zhang Xuan scratched his head in embarrassment.

For the Room of Ice and Fire trial, Zhang Xuan had to leave the room within two hours to gain an opportunity to enter the Yin-Yang Lake. Given that the time had passed, it wasn't wrong to say that he had already failed the test.

Pavilion Master Kang had worked so hard for him, going to the extent of even giving up on his student just so that he could get this opportunity... He wondered if the other party would faint in anger at his failure.

"Forget it, I'll just deal with it when it comes my way!"

In any case, Zhang Xuan was content with his gains here. Executing the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, Zhang Xuan flew back to where he came from.

Possessing a zhenqi cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 2-dan advanced stage now, Zhang Xuan could now sustain his flight for at least more than a dozen seconds.

Covering a distance of several thousand meters in this time period wasn't too hard of a task for him.

In just ten breaths, Zhang Xuan returned to the Room of Ice and Fire, and tapping on a few spots on the wall, the trapdoor closed.

After ensuring that everything was in place, Zhang Xuan tidied his clothes before walking out.

The moment he walked out, he saw Court Chief Wu, Pavilion Master Kang, and Ruohuan gongzi standing anxiously in front of the door. From the looks of it, if he didn't appear soon, they would immediately barge into the room.

"Zhang shi, are you okay?" Pavilion Master Kang asked worriedly.

"I'm fine!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

"Then you..." Ruohuan gongzi was perplexed. Since the other party was fine, why didn't he come out earlier? In the end, he exceeded the timing and lost the opportunity to enter the Yin-Yang Lake...

Court Chief Wu was also bewildered by the situation before her.

Even though Ruohuan gongzi and Zhao Ya had left the room within the allocated time, their states were rather unkempt when they walked out. On the other hand, not only was Zhang shi completely uninjured, his clothes were also completely intact as though they were new. He looked exactly the same as how he did when he first walked into the room...

What was going on?

This situation would normally only occur to geniuses who broke out of the illusion very quickly. Otherwise, under the effects of the illusion, one would suffer the assault of the power of yin and yang. Even if one's physical body was still fine, one's clothes would surely be tattered.

"Oh... I felt that the yin and yang energy in the room wasn't too bad so I started

cultivating. But due to my moment of excitement, I actually forgot about the time..." Zhang Xuan replied sheepishly.

He couldn't reveal the matter about the soul oracle, so he replied with a half-truth instead. However, hearing those words, everyone staggered and nearly spurted blood.

To cultivate... in a treacherous place like the Room of Ice and Fire?

Anyone else who entered the area would be thinking of how they could hold on, and yet, this fellow actually thought it was a good place and lost track of the time while cultivating...

Are you serious?

Court Chief Wu frowned.

"The Room of Ice and Fire has a special mechanism that plunged one into illusions as soon as they entered... How did you cultivate under such a situation?"

"I just happened to do so by sheer luck..." Zhang Xuan shook his head. Feeling that it might be dangerous for him to continue speaking of this matter, he changed the topic. "If that's the case, could I be considered to have passed the trial?"

"The conditions for passing the trial states that one must pass the Room of Ice and Fire within two hours... Even though you missed the timing due to being immersed in your cultivation, rules are still rules. I can't make an exception and qualify you..."

Court Chief Wu shook her head.

Even though she would have loved to see the young man before her succeed... the rules of the Glacier Plain Court were absolute.

Regardless of the reason behind the young man's delay, he had failed the trial, and thus, he failed to earn the qualification to enter the Yin-Yang Lake.

"Alright..."

Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He had already known this would be the result when he looked at the timing. In any

case, he didn't bear much hope for the Yin-Yang Lake for the first place. Besides, his soul cultivation had increased tremendously within the last two hours. Thus, he wasn't too disappointed.

"I'm willing to pass my slot on to my teacher..." Zhao Ya offered anxiously.

"There's no need for that!"

Zhang Xuan was touched by Zhao Ya's thoughtfulness, but he shook his hands. "The Yin-Yang Lake isn't of much use to me. Instead, you, as a cultivator possessing the Pure Yin Body, should make full use of this chance to cultivate properly and metamorphose."

"But..."

"Why? Are you disobeying my words now?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"No, just that..."

"No 'just that'! Follow Court Chief Wu to the Yin-Yang Lake and cultivate properly. Try to awaken your unique constitution further during this period of time!"

Then, turning to Court Chief Wu, Zhang Xuan said, "Court chief, since I've failed to earn the qualification to enter the Yin-Yang Lake, please bring Zhao Ya and Ruohuan gongzi over. I'll wait here with Pavilion Master Kang..."

"Un!"

Seeing that Zhang shi didn't insist on tagging along, Court Chief Wu heaved a sigh of relief. She beckoned to the duo and said, "The two of you, follow me."

"Yes..."

Seeing the displeasure on her teacher's face, Zhao Ya didn't dare to say much. Thus, she followed Court Chief Wu to the Yin-Yang Lake. Ruohuan gongzi also followed closely behind. Before leaving, he turned around to look at Zhang shi with a look of awe.

Despite losing such a precious opportunity, Zhang shi didn't cause a fuss or leverage on the other party's weakness for the other party to make an exception for him. As

expected of the person whom even his teacher was impressed with. He was indeed a true master teacher.

"Zhang shi, this opportunity is so hard to come by... It's truly a pity!"

After the trio left, Pavilion Master Kang couldn't help but lamented.

The nature of the Yin-Yang Lake made it extremely beneficial to the cultivation or Origin Energy realm and Yin-Yang realm cultivators. Otherwise, Pavilion Master Kang wouldn't have paid such a heavy price to bring the master teachers who passed the selection over.

He thought that given Zhang shi's ability, the latter would surely be able to pass the trial easily. Who could have expected that... he would actually fail!

If Zhang shi could have entered the Yin-Yang Lake, the chances of him getting into the top ten would be increased greatly.

And now... With the cultivation of a Transcendent Mortal 2-dan primary stage cultivator, it would be nearly impossible for him to succeed.

Before leaving the Myriad Kingdom City, Zhang Xuan had already made a breakthrough to Transcendent Mortal 2-dan advanced stage. However, this sudden leap in cultivation would raise doubts in the mind of others, Zhang Xuan chose to hide it. Thus, even Pavilion Master Kang was unaware that his cultivation had already increased by several tiers.

"Actually, it's nothing much..."

Zhang Xuan shook his head, "The Glacier Plain Court has its own rules as well. A failure means a failure; there's nothing much I can do about it. Speaking of which, I require middle-tier spirit stones for my cultivation. If Pavilion Master Kang has any of them... I am willing to exchange them with something of equivalent value."

What Yin-Yang Lake or blessed land... As the one who grasped the Heaven's Path Divine Art and Heaven's Path Soul Art, nothing was more useful to him as middle-tier spirit stones.

As long as he had sufficient spirit stones, achieving breakthroughs was a walk in the park.

"Middle-tier spirit stones?" Pavilion Master Kang was taken aback by the request. "I do have a few of them. If you need them for your cultivation, I can give them to you straight..."

As the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion, he had gathered quite a few middle-tier spirit stones over the years. However, as he required them for his own cultivation as well, he didn't have many of them left.

Still... if Zhang Shi could get a better placing in the Master Teacher Tournament, he would have no regrets even if he were to go bankrupt because of this.

The Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion was where he had devoted his effort to. As the pavilion master, naturally, he wished the best for it as well. If Zhang Shi could actually reach top ten, even if he were to die on the spot, he could at least face his predecessors proudly.

"Give them to me?"

Zhang Xuan was taken aback. Knowing the other party's thoughts, he actually felt impressed by the other party's devotion. "Pavilion Master Kang, there's no need to stand on ceremonies. I won't take your spirit stones for free..."

Even though the other party had his own motives as well, he was an upright person. Zhang Xuan wasn't willing to take the item from such a person without giving something equivalent in exchange.

Just as Zhang Xuan was considering whether he should help the latter achieve a breakthrough to Consonant Spirit realm when they return back to Myriad Kingdom City, a savage aura suddenly burst in the air, gushing into the heavens. It seemed as though the rage of an incredible expert had erupted.

Feeling the suddenly outburst of power, Pavilion Master Kang and Zhang Xuan narrowed their eyes simultaneously.

"It's Court Chief Wu... Shit!"

This aura couldn't be any more familiar to them-it belonged to Court Chief Wu.

What did this fellow intend to do by releasing such a powerful aura all of the sudden?

Could it be that... she means harm to Ruohuan gongzi and Zhao Ya?

She was a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan expert! If she were to really harbor such thoughts, even if the two of them were to work together, they would still be unable to withstand a single blow from her!

There was too huge of a difference between their cultivation!

"Let's go over and take a look!"

With a darkened complexion, the duo rushed toward the place where the aura was released from.

Chapter 553

The Embarrassed Zhang Xuan

Stepping against the ground, Pavilion Master Kang charged forward as though a leopard. He shook his arms, and zhenqi gushed frenziedly from his body, causing his speed to hasten once again.

Spirit intermediate-tier battle technique--Proud Eagle Soaring the Skies!

This was a movement technique, and even if it wasn't the strongest one in the Myriad Kingdom City, it wasn't too far off from that. Executing it, Pavilion Master Kang's speed surged. Even an expert of Alliance Head Zhao's caliber would find it hard to keep up.

Worried over the safety of his student, he even went to the extent of executing his ultimate move. "Zhang shi, I'll be going on ahead to take a look... Hmm? Where's he? The heck!"

Continuing on forward, Pavilion Master Kang turned his head to speak to Zhang shi. However, halfway through his words, his body stiffened, and he nearly fell to the ground.

There was no one behind him at all. Instead, there was a figure, who was now only the size of a black dot, flitting swiftly in front of him, about to disappear at any moment.

Who else could it be... other than Zhang shi?

He had used his strongest technique to move as fast as possible, and they thought that it would be impossible for the Transcendent Mortal 2-dan primary stage Zhang shi to catch up. Who could've known that... before he could finish his words, the other party had already disappeared!

The other party's speed was more than twofold faster than his!

One had to know that he was a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert, and on top of that, he had executed his strongest movement technique... And yet, he still nearly failed to even catch the other party's silhouette.

Even though he had seen the sight for himself, he couldn't help but think that maybe his eyes were playing tricks on him.

Was that still a Transcendent Mortal 2-dan cultivator?

Even a 5-dan wouldn't possess such speed...

'Wait a moment, he isn't 2-dan primary stage but... advanced stage?'

Pavilion Master Kang frowned.

Rushing at full speed, Zhang Shi's true cultivation was fully revealed... That wasn't the level of a Transcendent Mortal 2-dan primary stage but an... advanced stage.

How was that possible?

He had seen the other party making a breakthrough to Origin Energy realm right before him clearly-it couldn't possibly be faked... And yet, in just half a month, the other party actually advanced two small realms to reach 2-dan advanced stage?

No matter what, that was Transcendent Mortal 2-dan... To progress from primary stage to advanced stage in such a short period of time, not to mention, his cultivation had been reinforced and he seemed to be on the verge of making a breakthrough at any time...

How did he do it?

Wasn't that way too formidable?

Besides, even if the other party was at Origin Energy realm advanced stage, the other party was two huge cultivation realms weaker than a Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle expert like him. How could the other party be even faster than him given such? Not to mention, despite traveling at such speed, the other party's ability to make abrupt turns and leaps was absurd. At the very least, he knew that his Spirit intermediate-tier movement technique Proud Eagle Soaring the Skies was incapable of such a feat.

'Could it be that... he had cultivated a Spirit high-tier movement technique... or even a Spirit pinnacle battle technique?'

Pavilion Master Kang was shocked by his own thoughts.

Only the more powerful empires had the qualification to access such techniques. Even though he was the head of Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion, he was still unqualified to learn or even to access them.

Yet, Zhang shi, who had come from an Unranked Kingdom... actually had learned a battle technique of such level. His background must have been incredible...

'Su Fan and Ling Yuheng probably didn't tell me the complete truth... Zhang shi's background isn't simple at all! I'll have to ask them about it when I return!' Pavilion Master Kang thought.

Strength wasn't something that came from nowhere. Given how formidable Zhang shi was, his teacher and background must be anything but ordinary!

Given how Su shi and Ling shi vouched for him with all their might, they must know something about him.

"Zhang shi... Wait for me!"

Suppressing his shock, Pavilion Master Kang raised his gaze once more, only to see that Zhang shi's figure had disappeared altogether. Thus, he quickly chased the other party's back.

The Glacier Plain Court wasn't too big. The place where the savage aura was released was only several hundred meters away from them. After making a few turns, Zhang Xuan arrived at a vast hall.

Court Chief Wu, Ruohuan gongzi, Zhao Ya, as well as several red-robed and white-robed female disciples were present in the room. Every single one of them was shaking in fear before the immense might Court Chief Wu was releasing.

Before the group was an immense lake of around twenty meters wide. The lake was divided into two portions. It seemed like innumerable spirit stones had been embedded to it, creating a lake of pure spiritual energy.

"Could this be the... Yin-Yang Lake?"

Even though Zhang Xuan had heard of the name of Yin-Yang Lake, this was his first

time seeing it.

"Something's wrong... I've heard that the water of the Yin-Yang Lake is divided by their attribute; one end should be searing hot while the other end should be icy cold. Even though the lake in front is filled with spiritual energy, it doesn't seem to carry such attributes..."

Zhang Xuan frowned.

The Yin-Yang Lake was famous across the world due to the yin and yang energy flowing within it. One end was bone-piercing cold while the other end was unendurable heat. The both of them met at the center, forming a mystical sight.

Cultivating within the lake, one's zhenqi would be tempered by the power of hot and cold, yin and yang, thus making one's zhenqi even more dense. This would increase the speed of one's cultivation as well.

Even though the lake before him was divided into two, all Zhang Xuan could sense from it was the flow of spiritual energy. There was no heat or coldness from it... Could this not be the Yin-Yang Lake?"

During that period of time, Pavilion Master Kang also arrived on the scene. Upon seeing that his student wasn't injured, he turned to Court Chief Wu and asked with a doubtful expression, "Court Chief Wu, what happened?"

What in the world could have happened to send Court Chief Wu, a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan, into such rage?

"Something has cropped up with the Yin-Yang Lake..." Court Chief Wu said. Then, turning to the female disciples by the side, she bellowed, "Repeat what you said just now!"

"Yes!"

A female disciple stepped forward and said with a trembling voice, "Just as always, we came over here to clear up the... seed water, but we realized that... the power of yin and yang within the seed water had disappeared completely, just like... the Yin-Yang Lake..."

"The seed water is buried deep within the ground, and the power of yin and yang

within it originates from the earth vein and Ice Plain. How could it possibly disappear all of the sudden?" Court Chief Wu couldn't believe this matter.

"Reporting to court chief... this is a sample that we brought up from below. Look..."

The female disciple flicked her wrist and a pail appeared in her hands. It was a pail of clear water. Spiritual energy was dancing vigorously in it but... the water didn't carry the slightest chill or heat at all.

"The yin and yang attribute has really disappeared from the seed water? What's going on?"

Court Chief Wu's eyes reddened.

The Yin-Yang Lake was the very basis of the Glacier Plain Court. If it was ruined, this branch would be as good as destroyed.

While she was lashing out furiously, Zhang Xuan's mouth was twitching vigorously.

Initially, he wasn't too sure what the 'seed water' the other party spoke of referred to, but after seeing the water in the pail the female disciple brought over, he immediately shuddered.

Wasn't that what he absorbed just a moment ago?

Could it be related to the Yin-Yang Lake?

"Court Chief Wu, can you tell me what the seed water is? If there is any trouble, you could tell me about it. Perhaps we might find a solution to the problem by discussing it..."

Seeing the state of the court chief, Pavilion Master Kang suddenly got a bad premonition.

"This concerns the deepest secret of the Glacier Plain Court, so I didn't want to reveal it to you. However, given the current situation, it seems like I can't hide it any longer!"

Court Chief Wu hesitated for a moment before nodding her head.

Even though the group before her were all outsiders, they were also master teachers.

This was a huge crisis and she had no choice but to pin her hopes on them.

"This is the Yin-Yang Lake!"

Court Chief Wu gestured to the giant lake before them. "Are you all curious why there is no collision between searing heat and frigid coldness in the lake, as is said in the rumors?"

Everyone nodded their heads.

This was especially so for Pavilion Master Kang. He had noticed all of this as soon as he arrived, and this had left him perplexed.

"The spiritual energy from the Yin-Yang Lake originates from spirit stones, I believe you all should be able to tell as much. However, the yin and yang energy within originates from the seed water!

"The seed water is created by the Glacier Plain Court by fusing the searing heat of the earth vein and the frigid coldness of the Ice Plain through a unique method. It is usually buried deep in the mountain vein, and only when it is required will we take a pail of water from it and pour it in this lake..." Court Chief Wu explained.

Even though it was just a brief introduction, it concerned the deepest secret and most fundamental secret behind the existence of the Glacier Plain Court.

The supposed Yin-Yang Lake wasn't naturally-formed but man-made. Its very foundation was the seed water. Only by pouring a pail of seed water in the Yin-Yang Lake would yin and yang energy be granted to the water, turning it into a blessed land for cultivators.

It was just like a bottle of syrup and the cordial made of it. The most important part of it wasn't the cordial but the bottle of syrup!

And at this moment... the yin and yang attribute of the seed water... had actually disappeared altogether!

Without the seed water, the Yin-Yang Lake would be reduced to nothing more than a lake concentrated in spiritual energy. Even though it was still useful to one's cultivation, its effectiveness was significantly lower than before...

"This..."

Pavilion Master Kang's mouth twitched.

He thought that it might be a simple problem, but from the looks of it, it was something way beyond his ability.

The seed water was the most fundamental secret of the Glacier Plain Court. How could he possibly know how to fix something like that?

Even Court Chief Wu, who had spent her entire life alongside it, was unable to solve it. What kind of solution could he possibly offer?

Honestly speaking, he felt that his luck was truly bad. He'd gone through so much effort to get the slots in hope that the cultivation of their participants of the Master Teacher Tournament could increase significantly through this. Never in his dreams did he expect to stumble by such a problem...

"Right, Zhang shi..."

Shaking his head, Pavilion Master Kang was just about to tell the other party that he was helpless before this issue when he remembered the miracle-making Zhang Xuan. Thus, he turned his gaze to the latter, but the sight he saw made him frown.

At this moment, Zhang shi had a bizarre look on his face. He looked as though he had done something wrong, and his face was red in guilt.

"Zhang shi, what's wrong?"

It was bizarre for the active Zhang Xuan to behave in such a manner instead of offering a solution. Court Chief Wu, also sensing that something was amiss, turned her gaze to the latter.

Everyone else also followed suit, and soon, all eyes were gathered on him.

"I..."

Hearing the question, Zhang Xuan's face reddened further. Scratching his head, he said, "That... Court Chief Wu, previously, at the Room of Ice and Fire, didn't I tell you that... I cultivated for a while?"

Court Chief Wu and Pavilion Master Kang was surprised to hear Zhang Xuan raise up this issue all of the sudden, but they still nodded their heads.

The other party did indeed say such words. It was due to this matter that he failed to pass the trial.

Scratching his head in embarrassment, Zhang Xuan continued, "Cough cough... while I was cultivating, I accidentally exerted too much force and... sapped the yin and yang energy in your seed water dry..."

Chapter 554

Compensation

"Ah?"

"Exerted too much force?"

Court Chief Wu, Pavilion Master Kang, and the others were stunned.

Ruohuan gongzi's mouth twitched, and he nearly fainted on the spot.

He had been wondering why Zhang shi would fail the trial despite the fact that even he could clear it. So, this was the main reason behind it... The latter had already gone ahead and absorbed the seed water dry, rendering the Yin-Yang Lake obsolete... Under such circumstances, was there still a need for him to clear the trial?

To think that he was even awed by the other party's openness in admitting his defeat... Looking at it now, the other party was truly shameless!

What do we do now given that you have gone ahead to sap the seed water dry?

Ruohuan gongzi truly felt like crying now.

Ever since he met this fellow, regardless of what he did, be it the selection round or the current trial, there was nothing that went his way. He seemed to be either getting slapped on the face or was on the way to be getting slapped on the face.

If not for his strong mental resilience, he would have long gone mad from this.

"Y-you... actually sapped the power of yin and yang within the seed water dry?"

Court Chief Wu finally recovered from her shock and stared at the young man before her with a frenzied look.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan replied sheepishly.

Even though he knew the name of that small lake below through the Library of Heaven's Path, he had no idea that it would be so important to the Yin-Yang Lake... He had only wanted to temper his soul for a bit, he didn't think that something so important would turn out to be so fragile, breaking down when it had only boosted his soul cultivation from Transcendent Mortal 2-dan to 4-dan.

But thinking deeper into it, that was to be expected. After all, the seed water was only responsible for the production of yin and yang energy. The spiritual energy contained within it for Zhang Xuan's cultivation was lacking. The bulk of the spiritual energy for the Yin-Yang Lake mainly came from the innumerable spirit stones embedded in the surroundings.

As such, the yin and yang energy within the seed water was quickly sapped dry by him.

Upon understanding all of this, Zhang Xuan felt extremely stifled.

If only he'd known how easily that thing broke down, as well as its importance, he would have never touched it!

Just like his zhenqi cultivation, his soul cultivation could be raised as long as he had sufficient middle-tier spirit stones.

He had no way to compensating for the seed water and Yin-Yang Lake!

But still... the seed water wasn't completely useless. After all, its effects were different from that of the spirit stones. A soul that had absorbed the yin and yang energy would be similar to have undergone a lightning tribulation, making it even more tangible and purer. This was something that a spirit stone could never hope to achieve.

"The seed water is hidden deep underground, and the Room of Ice and Fire is only connected to it so that one would be exposed to the power of yin and yang... There's a distance of several thousand meters between both ends. Even at such a distance, you were still able to absorb it?"

Court Chief Wu found the matter too difficult to believe.

Given the distance between the Room of Ice and Fire and the seed water, how did he manage to sap everything dry?

"Cough cough... When I entered the Room of Ice and Fire, I found a mechanism that exposed a trapdoor..." Zhang Xuan said.

Court Chief Wu trembled.

That was a mechanism designed by a 5-star celestial designer! Even she could only open it with the token given to her as the court chief. Yet, this fellow was actually able to activate it... How in the world did he do it?

More importantly... that was only a small ventilation pipe. It only had two purposes- the Room of Ice and Fire trial, and to connect the seed water to the environment so as to nourish it. As such, the ventilation pipe was just a straight vertical opening with a height of several thousand meters... There was nothing there to break one's fall... Jumping down just like that would surely result in death!

Besides, if he had really gone down, how in the world did he get back up?

"It's my fault for absorbing the yin and yang energy of your seed water dry. How about this... I won't take advantage of you. I've taken a good look at your battle technique just now, and the Glacier Plain Court's Yin Formula and Yang Formula possess a fatal flaw. If I'm not mistaken, all who cultivate those two formulae will die early!"

Zhang Xuan felt guilty at destroying the centerpiece of the other party's court. It just so happened that he had taken a good look at the yin and yang attribute disciple just now, and he realized that there were some problems with their cultivation techniques. He hoped to make it up to the other party through this way.

"You..."

Court Chief Wu was stunned.

The yin and yang formula disciples were usually groomed to take care of the seed water. As such, facing frequent immense pressure from the earth vein and the Ice Plain, their lifespans were severely limited. Even if they managed to make the breakthrough into Transcendent Mortal realm, sixty was still a huge hurdle for them.

However, this was a secret of their Glacier Plain Court... This Zhang shi actually managed to see through this as well?

"I can modify your cultivation technique so as to get rid of this trauma in

compensation for your loss!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Modify... the cultivation technique?" Court Chief Wu shuddered.

This flaw had been existent in the heritage for the Glacier Plain Court for innumerable years. If it could really be resolved, that person would really be a benefactor to all of the members of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain. Putting aside destroying a branch, even if he were to destroy ten of them, the headquarters wouldn't even frown in the least.

However... even if it could be modified, it was hard to believe that it could come from the hands of a young man who wasn't even twenty yet.

"The greatest flaw with those two cultivation techniques is that yang and yin energy will accumulate, causing one's meridians to be blocked. Even though yang and yin energy are the most original energy of the world, very few cultivators have a constitution compatible with it. If it were to accumulate for an extended period of time, it was very easy for one's foundation to be destroyed. This is similar to ginseng; even though it brings many benefits to the human body, there are still some who are incompatible with it. As long as one's constitution is in conflict with it, even the best tonic could turn into lethal poison..."

Knowing the other party's concerns, Zhang Xuan continued, "If it can be solved at its very root, the compatibility between one's constitution and the yin and yang energy will increase. It won't be difficult for them to regain their lost lifespan!"

Court Chief Wu didn't cultivate the Yin Formula or Yang Formula, but the other disciples did. Furthermore, due to their lower cultivation, Zhang Xuan's Eye of Insight was able to work perfectly on them.

Through his observations, he realized that most of them were suffering from the same trauma, and if they weren't treated soon, their lifespan could be severely limited.

A Transcendent Mortal realm cultivator's lifespan can usually reach two hundred to three hundred years. To live until only sixty was truly tragic in comparison.

Court Chief Wu was hesitant, but soon, gritting her teeth; she took out two manuals and passed them over. "Zhang shi, I'll be troubling you for the cultivation techniques..."

Initially, she was still harboring some doubts, thinking that the other party was trying to make use of this opportunity to peek into their cultivation technique. Only after

hearing the explanation did she realize that she was wrongly doubting the other party.

The other party was even able to see through the essence and main flaws of their cultivation technique-this meant that the Yin Formula and Yang Formula probably didn't mean much to the other party at all. So how could he possibly resort to such underhanded tricks to attain their cultivation technique?

"Un!" Taking the cultivation technique manual, a corresponding book immediately appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Lowering his head to browse through the manual, it was exactly as what he perceived using his Eye of Insight previously-those who cultivated these two manuals would suffer a serious trauma that would shorten their lifespans.

But fortunately, the flaws of the cultivation techniques were clearly shown through the Library of Heaven's Path. Thus, modifying the cultivation technique wasn't too difficult.

Soon, Zhang Xuan picked up his brush and started changing the incorrect portions of the cultivation techniques that resulted in the shortening of lifespan before passing it back.

"This..."

Grabbing hold of the cultivation technique, Court Chief Wu took a look and started trembling.

As a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan expert who had governed over the Glacier Plain Court for many years, she could easily tell whether the modifications were effective or not.

And based on her evaluation, she could foresee everyone in the Glacier Plain Court recovering from their trauma if they were to cultivate by this modified manual.

To change a cultivation technique right after taking a look... How formidable was this young man?

Even Pavilion Master Kang was incompatible of such a feat!

"Thank you Zhang shi for saving countless members of our Glacier Plain Court!"

She knew that this cultivation technique would surely cause a huge uproar if she were to report it back the headquarters. Who knows how many current and future members would be saved by cultivating this modified technique? Unable to hold back her agitation any longer, Court Chief Wu kneeled to the floor and kowtowed.

"Ah... Court Chief Wu, what are you doing..."

Not expecting the other party to kowtow to him, Zhang Xuan was alarmed. He hurried forward to pull the other party up.

Court Chief Wu shook her hands and replied gravely, "I am thanking you in the stead of our entire Glacier Plain Court. Please don't turn down our gratitude!"

Due to the limitations of their cultivation technique, there were more than a hundred thousand disciples who were unable to live past sixty. Once this cultivation technique got out, they would be saved from the tragic fate of an early death... In other words, Zhang shi, with this action, had saved the lives of more than several hundred thousand people. Her bow represented the gratitude of all of these people.

"Alright then..."

Since the other party was adamant, Zhang Xuan could only concede.

On the other hand, Pavilion Master Kang and Ruohuan gongzi's vision turned dark, and they nearly spurted blood.

When they learned that Zhang shi had devoured the yin and yang energy in the seed water clean, they thought that Court Chief Wu would surely kill him. Who knew that in a blink of an eye, the latter would actually be kneeling to him...

Zhang shi, what other incredible feats are you capable of?

To modify a cultivation technique and solve a problem that had plagued the members of the Origin Flame Glacier Plains for so long...

That was no longer a feat that a master teacher was capable of. In fact, Pavilion Master Kang even thought that a 5-star master teacher couldn't possibly fare any better than him.

After kowtowing grandly three times, Court Leader Wu finally stood up.

Even though the other party had ruined the seed water, in exchange, he had saved countless lives of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain. His contributions had far exceeded his misdoings.

"The reason why we traveled here is to cultivate at the Yin-Yang Lake in preparation of the Master Teacher Tournament. Since I inadvertently ruined the Yin-Yang Lake, resulting in you being unable to advance your cultivation... How about this, I'll offer you some pointer so that you can reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle within a month as compensation!"

After dealing with Court Chief Wu's matter, Zhang Xuan turned his attention to Ruohuan gongzi.

Initially, this fellow came excitedly in hopes of using the Yin-Yang Lake to boost his cultivation. Who could have known that the yin and yang energy contained within the lake would be sapped dry by him, resulting in his plans being messed up. Naturally, Zhang Xuan should also compensate him as well.

"Reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle within a month?"

Ruohuan gongzi was taken aback.

He was a master teacher himself, and his teacher was even the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion. Throughout his life, he had come into contact with all kinds of ingenious solutions to boost one's rate of cultivation. But even so, he knew that it was impossible for him to reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle without at least a decade of hard work. To do so in a month...

You must be dreaming!

"When you cultivate, do you feel your spirit sea is being blocked, as though you are trying to force through a narrow tunnel?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Ah... Yes!"

Ruohuan gongzi nodded his head.

The main reason why the progress in his cultivation had been slow wasn't due to the lack of resources or his lack of knowledge on how to progress further. Rather, the zhenqi in his body seemed to have met with some kind of impetus, making it difficult

for him to drive it around his body.

"The solution is simple. Eat this pill, I guarantee you that you will be able to reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle within a month!"

Zhang Xuan nonchalantly took out a fist-sized red pill.

Ruohuan gongzi's body swayed and his face distorted.

"This is... the grade-2 Libido Pill that is fed to savage beasts?"

Chapter 555

The Glacier Plain

As a 4-star master teacher, Ruohuan gongzi possessed outstanding eye of discernment. The pill in the other party's hand looked upright, but in truth, it was the Libido Pill that was fed to savage beasts.

The more formidable a savage beast was, the lower the probability of survival of its offspring. Thus, in order to encourage reproduction, beast tamers would feed this pill to the other party.

After consuming it, the savage beast would immediately become lively. It would go without rest for several days and nights, thus guaranteeing an offspring.

This pill which was even larger than a fist should have been meant for just savage beasts. Yet, the other party was asking him to consume it?

Ruohuan gongzi swallowed a mouthful of saliva, and at this moment, he even felt like dying.

"That's right. This is indeed a medicine for the consumption of savage beasts. However, it happens to be effective for your condition, so hurry up and consume it... Oh, you have to swallow it whole. You mustn't chew it..." Zhang Xuan instructed.

"Swallow it whole?"

Ruohuan gongzi staggered.

How in the world am I supposed to swallow a fist-sized pill whole? Even if I can stuff it into my mouth, it surely won't go down my throat!

Big brother, what kind of grudge do I have with you? You aren't trying to raise my cultivation but kill me, right?

"You have to swallow it whole. Otherwise, its effects will be reduced!"

Throwing the pill to Pavilion Master Kang, Zhang Xuan instructed, "Since you are his teacher, you should help him swallow it whole!"

"Me?"

Seeing the Libido Pill meant for savage beasts in his hand, Pavilion Master Kang's mouth twitched. Raising his head, he asked, 'Can this... really help Ruohuan's cultivation?"

"Of course!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Alright then..."

Gritting his teeth, Pavilion Master Kang walked up to Ruohuan gongzi. "Ruohuan, come here and eat your medicine. Ah, don't run..."

He rushed forward to grab Jun Ruohuan and pushed him down to the floor. Then, he forced this giant pill into the other party's mouth before using his zhenqi to force it down the other party's throat.

"Cough cough..."

Ruohuan gongzi kept coughing non-stop, and his saliva flew around the place.

At this moment, he no longer bore the slightest resemblance to a gentleman. A beggar would be a more apt description for him.

What dashing and refined disposition? It had all disappeared along with the wind at this current moment.

Seeing that the latter still had the effort to allow his snot to run, Zhang Xuan bellowed, "Don't get distracted! Guard your vitals and drive your cultivation technique!"

"Yes!"

Even though he was dismayed, he knew that if he didn't follow the other party's instructions, chances were that he might be forced to swallow yet another one. If he had to undergo that experience once more, he might really die. Thus, he hurriedly sat cross-legged and started cultivating.

As soon as he sat down properly, he immediately felt an indescribable heat burning his body, causing his pores to widen.

Hong long!

Under the stimulation of medicine, his narrow meridians which had impeded his flow of zhenqi widened, and in an instant, his turbid zhenqi seemed have turned clear, allowing it to smoothly circulate around his body.

Kacha! Kacha!

With a crisp sound, he broke through his Transcendent Mortal 4-dan primary stage bottleneck and advanced to intermediate stage.

"He... really succeeded?"

Pavilion Master Kang was taken aback. Even Court Chief Wu widened her eyes in shock.

They thought that Zhang Xuan's method was inconceivable and ridiculous. Thus, they were shocked to see that Ruohuan gongzi actually made a breakthrough. Only then did they understand that the other party possessed true capability and saw through the root of the problem...

"There are two ways to solve the slow flow of zhenqi in his body. Firstly, expand his meridians, and secondly, purify his zhenqi..."

Seeing the shocked gazes of the duo, Zhang Xuan chuckled. "The Libido Pill has the effect of boosting a savage beast's blood circulation and widening their meridians. Naturally, it's useful for humans as well!"

When he was competing with Ruohuan gongzi in the selection rounds, the latter had once used the ability of a master teacher, and thus, he had the flaws of the latter recorded in the Library of Heaven's Path. Even though it had been half a month since then, the other party's cultivation hadn't undergone much change, and thus, the flaw still remained the same.

That was why Zhang Xuan was able to easily find a solution to the other party's problem.

Other than that, more importantly... Zhang Xuan had secretly infused a surge of Heaven's Path zhenqi into the pill. After the other party consumed it, not only did his meridians expand, his zhenqi also became purer. As such, it was much easier for him to achieve a breakthrough.

Just that, the Heaven's Path zhenqi was too important to allow others to learn of it. If Ruohuan gongzi were to chew on the pill slowly, there was a possibility that he might realize that something was amiss. That was why he had Pavilion Master Kang force it into the other party's mouth.

This way, the medicine could dissolve in his stomach, and the Heaven's Path zhenqi would immediately fuse with the other party's own zhenqi, making it undetectable and untraceable.

"This..."

Pavilion Master Kang was stunned.

He could sense that there was something deeper to it, but... other than the explanation Zhang Xuan offered, there didn't seem to be any other plausible reason to it.

"Then... what about after this? Will he be afflicted by libido due to the pill?" Pavilion Master Kang asked.

This method did allow his student to achieve a breakthrough, but what about after this?

Given the size of the pill, the medicinal property must be exceptionally strong. How were they supposed to deal with it?

"Oh, this... I didn't think that far!" Zhang Xuan shook his head nonchalantly.

"You didn't think that far?" Pavilion Master Kang staggered. On the other hand, Ruohuan gongzi felt a stifling sensation at his chest, and his cultivation nearly went berserk.

What do you mean by you never thought about it?

You made me consume such a huge Libido Pill, then... you want me to deal with it myself?

"Don't worry, this is a Libido Pill aimed at savage beast. Given the inferior intelligence of savage beasts, it is natural for them to cave in to them. Surely Ruohuan gongzi isn't worse than a beast, right?"

Zhang Xuan continued, "In fact, this is a precious opportunity to assess his self-control... If a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan expert can't even do that much, he would truly be too weak-minded!"

"Un!" Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head in agreement.

Transcendent Mortals have an extremely powerful control over their own body, and they could already control their own lust.

Compared to achieving a breakthrough, this little bit of libido was indeed insignificant in contrast.

"..." Tears streamed down Ruohuan gongzi's eyes.

He thought that there was a solution to ease his urge, but it turned out that... he indeed had to cope with it himself... For a moment he felt incomparably depressed. It was hard to tell whether it was due to the stifled sensation in his heart or his body's reaction.

A moment later, after reinforcing his cultivation and suppressing the urge, Ruohuan gongzi walked up to Zhang Xuan and bowed.

"Thank you, Zhang shi!"

Even though the process was lengthy and cruel, he was still awed by the other party's capability.

His resentment toward the other party for devouring the yin and yang energy of the seed water dry had also vanished completely.

Honestly speaking, even if the Yin-Yang Lake was perfectly fine, in a months' time, he could only progress from Clarifying Turbidity realm primary stage to intermediate stage. But now, in the blink of an eye, he had already made the breakthrough. This was already much better than his estimates.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony. Given your swift zhenqi flow, as long as you

have sufficient middle-tier spirit stones, reaching Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle within a month shouldn't be a problem at all.

Zhang Xuan nodded his head in satisfaction.

The Heaven's Path zhenqi had been infused into the other party's body, turning the originally viscous zhenqi thinner. This should boost the other party's future speed of cultivation significantly. In a sense, it wasn't wrong to say that it was a blessing in disguise for the other party.

"Zhang shi, I am grateful for you for helping my student. Please accept these five middle-tier spirit stones as compensation..."

Checking his student's physical condition, Pavilion Master Kang noticed the immense change in the other party. He knew that there was probably more than the Libido Pill, and grateful to Zhang Xuan, he took out a jade box and passed it over to Zhang Xuan respectfully.

Conventions dictated that guidance from a master teacher warranted payment. The other party's means were profound even in his standards. In his view, it was already comparable to the ability of a 5-star master teacher. Five middle-tier spirit stones weren't cheap, but it was probably insufficient to fully repay the Zhang shi for his help.

But this was already the full extent of his wealth. He couldn't take out any more money than that even if he wanted to.

"Pavilion Master Kang, you're being too courteous. Being unable to use the Yin-Yang Lake is a huge mistake on my part..."

After trading some pleasantries, Zhang Xuan took the jade box, took out a middle-tier spirit stone, and passed it to Jun Ruohuan. "Cultivate diligently during this period of time with this middle-tier spirit stone. It should be sufficient for you to reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle!"

After which, he passed one to Zhao Ya, and turning to Court Chief Wu, he asked, "Court chief, since the seed water is already ruined, may I borrow the Glacier Plain of the Glacier Plain Court to use?"

Even though Zhang Xuan had absorbed the yin and yang energy from it dry, the earth vein and Glacier Plain were still intact.

"What do you intend to do?"

Court Chief Wu was alarmed.

The Glacier Plain was one of the most important asset of their Origin Flame Glacier Plain. Outsiders were strictly forbidden from coming into contact with it.

Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before saying, "Given Zhao Ya's Pure Yin Body, if she were to absorb the Glacier Plain, her cultivation should improve swiftly. Most likely, she should gain sufficient strength to solve your affliction within half a month. Otherwise, if she were to cultivate as per normal, it would be hard to reach the same level without half a year of effort."

Initially, he intended to make use of the Yin-Yang Lake to boost Zhao Ya's cultivation. Since the plan was out of question now, he could only think of an alternative.

It was fortunate that the Glacier Plain was still intact. If they were to make use of this, the effects should be much greater than the supposed Yin-Yang Lake.

"This..."

Court Chief Wu was stunned.

She didn't expect the other party to still be thinking of her affliction.

Suppressing her hastened breathing, Court Chief Wu replied, "Given that she possesses the Pure Yin Body, she is of utmost importance to us members of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain. Putting aside one Glacier Plain, even if we had to give her our all, it wouldn't mean much at all. I'll bring the Glacier Plain over..."

Saying so, she turned around and left.

Not too long later, she returned with a jade box in hand.

Opening it slowly, an object similar to a spirit stone but exuding a dense aura of coldness diffused in the room. For an instant, it felt as though one would be turned into a block of ice.

Others might only feel bone-piercing chill from it, but as soon as Zhao Ya saw the item, her eyes immediately glowed, and she could feel the blood in her body flowing quicker.

Passing the jade box to her, Zhang Xuan instructed, "Zhao Ya, follow the cultivation technique I imparted to you a few days ago. If there's anything you are unsure of, feel free to ask me!"

"Yes!" Zhao Ya nodded.

After making all the arrangements, Zhang Xuan said, "Alright, I need to go into seclusion to cultivate now too!"

Of the five middle-tier spirit stones that Pavilion Master Kang gave him, he'd given one to Ruohuan and one to Zhao Ya, leaving him with three. It should be more than sufficient for him to reach Transcendent Mortal 2-dan pinnacle already.

Court Chief Wu had already sent a few people to tidy up the rooms for their lodging.

Thus, in the next few days, Zhang Xuan, Ruohuan, and Zhao Ya devoted themselves to their cultivation.

Time passed swiftly, and in the blink of an eye, half a month had passed.

With the help of the three middle-tier spirit stones, Zhang Xuan managed to reach Transcendent Mortal 2-dan pinnacle on the very first day, and he spent the next few days reinforcing his cultivation.

On the other hand, just two days ago, Ruohuan gongzi had managed to reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan advanced stage.

But the one who improved the swiftest during this period of time wasn't him but Zhao Ya.

In half a months' time, through the help of the Glacier Plain, Zhao Ya managed to awaken her unique constitution to thirty percent. At the same time, her cultivation leaped from Half-Transcension all the way to Transcendent Mortal 4-dan! At the current moment, her cultivation was even stronger than her own teacher's!

The further awakening of the Pure Yin Body had also made her disposition much more refined. From afar, she looked like a sacred goddess from the heavens, unsullied by the dirt of the mortal world.

Ruohuan gongzi found feeling of admiration for the latter sprouting in his heart, but...

recalling Zhang Shi's immense strength, he could only obediently retract such thoughts.

He was already reduced to such a terrible state despite doing nothing out of hand. If he were to really set his sights on the other party's students, he probably wouldn't survive to participate in the Master Teacher Tournament.

Chapter 556

Zhao Ya's Departure (1)

After the huge improvement, there was no longer as big of a gap in the cultivation between Zhao Ya and Court Chief Wu. Within a day, Zhang Xuan successfully utilized the blood of the former to resolve the affliction that had plagued the latter for many years, thus winning him the latter's gratitude.

"Zhang shi, the envoy from the headquarters hopes to meet you!"

By this time, it wouldn't be too much longer before the start of the Master Teacher Tournament. Just as Pavilion Master Kang and the others intended to leave, Court Chief Wu walked over.

She had reported the improvements in the Yin Formula and Yang Formula to the headquarters, and due to this matter, the envoy rushed all the way here.

"Alright!"

Nodding his head, Zhang Xuan followed Court Chief Wu to the hall of the Glacier Plain Court.

This was where Court Chief Wu had hosted them when they first arrived in the Glacier Plain Court. As soon as they arrived, they saw a middle-aged lady sitting at the very center. Noticing their arrival, she turned her head to look at them.

"Envoy, this is Zhang shi!" Court Chief Wu stepped forward and introduced.

"Zhang shi, I am Liu Xuan from the Origin Flame Glacier Plain headquarters!"

The envoy clasped her fist respectfully. Her eyes were filled with commendation for the young man before her.

She was still doubtful when she first received the news, but after looking at the modifications made to the cultivation technique, she was immediately stunned.

She thought that a person capable of modifying their cultivation technique would surely be an old elder, but contrary to her expectations, it turned out to be a young man who had yet to reach his twenties.

"Zhang Xuan, master teacher!"

Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and returned the greetings. At the same time, he began to assess the lady before him, and with just a single look, his eyes couldn't help but narrow in shock.

The cultivation of the lady before him felt like the vast ocean-unfathomable. Even with his current eye of discernment, he realized he couldn't gauge the full extent of the other party's strength!

In fact, the power she harnessed felt even more fearsome than what Zhang Xuan felt when facing Mo Hunsheng back in the soul oracle tomb!

Mo Hunsheng had already achieved the cultivation of Transcendent Mortal realm 9-dan. To be even stronger than him, how powerful was she?

It was no wonder why she could rush here from the headquarter within half a month... Truly fearsome!

"Not bad!"

On the other hand, the middle-aged lady, upon seeing the young man's nonchalance despite noticing her fearsome cultivation, nodded her head in commendation. Then, with a chuckle, she said, "There are two reasons why I made the journey here from the headquarters!"

"Oh?" Zhang Xuan turned to look at her.

"Firstly, the modifications Zhang shi made to the cultivation technique had saved innumerable members of our Origin Flame Glacier Plain. On behalf of the entire Glacier Plain Court, thank you. At the same time, we would like to extend our invitation to you to visit the headquarters as a guest. Our Glacier Plan Court is willing to honor you with the privileges equivalent to an elder!"

"Elder?"

Listening into the conversation by the side, Court Chief Wu's body trembled.

The Glacier Plain Court headquarters was one of the most famous and strongest powers across the entire Master Teacher Continent. As the court chief of a branch, she had a rough idea of the extent of its influence and strength. Even if she were to devote her entire life into it, it would still be impossible for her to become an elder of the headquarter.

That was a position only granted to the strongest and most talented of their members.

"What are the conditions?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Since the other party had pushed such an attractive offer in front of him, naturally, she had to have her own demands as well. After all, there was no such thing as a free lunch in this world.

"Zhang shi is indeed candid!"

Seeing how the young man before her didn't get blinded with joy by the offer, Liu Xuan nodded her head in commendation. "Simple. We hope that Zhang shi can help us solve the problems regarding our cultivation technique and... become a permanent resident of our Glacier Plain Court!"

"A permanent resident? In other words, I'm not allowed to leave the premises?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

The fundamental heritage to an occupation lay in its unique techniques. As such, they would never show it to an outsider easily. Since the other party had requested him to solve the other problems regarding their cultivation technique and become a permanent resident of the Glacier Plain Court, her intentions couldn't be any clearer... In order to prevent the cultivation technique from leaking out, Zhang Xuan's movements would be tightly restricted. Without permission, he wouldn't be able to leave the premises!

If that was the case, what difference was he from a prisoner?

"Zhang shi, please don't misunderstand. Leaving isn't a problem, but you'll have to pass the loyalty test of the Glacier Plain Court first so as to ensure that you won't betray us. After all, you should know how important the heritage of an occupation is. We also have to make precautions against having our cultivation techniques leaked

out..."

Having her intentions pointed out directly, Envoy Liu Xuan felt slightly awkward.

"I understand that you have your own considerations. However, I can't agree to your invitation!" Zhang Xuan shook his hands.

Becoming a prisoner?

You must be joking! I don't have such masochistic tendencies!

Despite being rejected outright, Envoy Liu Xuan had no intentions of giving up yet. "Actually, our Glacier Plain Court isn't a bad place to be. All of our members are ladies, and as long as Zhang Shi desires for it, you can marry as many of them as you wish!"

The Glacier Plain Court was filled with incomparably beautiful ladies, and there were quite a few powerful male guests who decided to reside there permanently out of lust.

"Let's talk about the second matter instead!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Restricted by his physical condition, he had no choice but to become a 9-star master teacher before thirty to ensure his survival. Compared to that, prestige and lust seemed negligible in comparison.

This was also the reason why even though he knew that Princess Mo Yu, Shen Bi Ru, and a few other ladies were interested in him, he still remained unmoved.

Given that his life was hanging by a thread, how could he possibly have the time and effort to be thinking about romance?

Seeing the other party rejecting her offer, a hint of disappointment appeared on Envoy Liu Xuan's face. However, she soon adjusted her mental state, turned to look at the young man before her, and spoke seriously.

"The second matter is regarding your student... Zhao Ya!"

Zhang Xuan frowned.

"The Pure Yin Body is extremely important to our Origin Flame Glacier Plain. I believe that Court Chief Wu should have told you that before," Envoy Liu Xuan said.

"Court Chief Wu did say something along that line, but she didn't elaborate on the reason behind it!"

Previously, Court Chief Wu had only said that the fate of the Glacier Plain Court was reliant on the existence of a Pure Yin Body cultivator.

"The heritage of the Origin Flame Glacier Plain originated from an old ancestor possessing the Pure Yin Body. As such, there is a rule stating that the highest court chief of the Glacier Plain Court must possess the Pure Yin Body... It has been a thousand years since the death of the previous court chief, but we have been unable to find a single person who possesses the Pure Yin Body! Left without a leader, many other powers began to exploit the weakness of the Glacier Plain Court, and to date, it's already on the verge of collapsing."

Envoy Liu Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. "If we could find a successor possessing the Pure Yin Body to take on the mantle, our Glacier Plain Court might be able to avert the dissolution and rise again once more."

"Highest court chief?"

Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

He didn't expect this to be the reason why they wanted Zhao Ya.

"Indeed!" Envoy Liu Xuan nodded. "Thus, I hope to bring Zhao Ya back to the headquarter and find a way to quickly awaken her unique constitution so that she could inherit the position of the court chief as soon as possible."

"I can also awaken her unique constitution myself!"

Zhang Xuan shook his hands.

Even though both his strength and the resources he possessed were lacking, he was still able to induce swift growth in Zhao Ya... He had the confidence in awakening the latter's unique constitution eventually.

"I've heard of Zhang Shi's affairs and I know that you're a capable person. It's indeed likely that Zhao Ya's Pure Yin Body will be fully awakened one day if she were to stay by you. However... Zhang Shi, have you ever considered how long it would take for that to happen? Ten years? Twenty years? Fifty years? Or perhaps, even a century?"

Envoy Liu Xuan stared deeply at Zhang Xuan. "The awakening of a unique constitution only becomes harder the further one progresses. The resources required for it will grow exponentially. Even if Zhang Shi is willing to give in without any expectation for returns, do you think that Zhao Ya... is willing to quietly accept so much from you?"

"This..."

Zhang Xuan found himself unable to refute the other party's words.

Indeed. Similar to the cultivating, the awakening of a unique constitution would only grow harder and harder the further one progressed.

Even if he was capable of obtaining the required resources to help Zhao Ya, could she really bear accepting this much from him?

Given Zhao Ya's nature, this was something she wouldn't be able to accept.

Furthermore, she couldn't spend her entire life living under Zhang Xuan's protection.

The purpose of a teacher was to guide one down the right path, not to give them everything that they required.

Envoy Liu Xuan continued, "If she were to come to our Glacier Plain Court, we can offer her the most perfect inheritance and the most generous cultivation resources. She would be able to awaken her unique constitution in the shortest time possible, thus becoming a figure able to shake the entire continent. Given how deeply you care for your student, you should also hope that she would become independent and accomplish something of her own as soon as possible."

Zhang Xuan fell silent.

As a teacher, he had to think of the long-term benefit of his students.

He had come to the same thoughts. While he could guarantee that he would be able to awaken Zhao Ya's unique constitution and groom her to become one of the strongest experts in the future, admittedly, he would be unable to do it as quickly as the Glacier Plain Court could.

After all, just the resources in itself had created an irreconcilable gap.

Besides, given that the previous court chiefs all possessed Pure Yin Body, they probably possessed a complete inheritance on the method to awakening the unique constitution. In a way, this was much more efficient and effective than him fumbling around for a solution.

"My opinions are of little importance. The ultimate decision is on her. Regardless of what her choice is, I'll support her!"

Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He was just a teacher. While he had the responsibility to guide his students down the right path, he didn't have the right to dictate their future. If Zhao Ya intends to follow the envoy of the Glacier Court Plain, he would support her decision.

And if she refuses... He wouldn't allow anyone to force her into the decision, not even the mighty Glacier Plain Court!

"Teacher, I'm willing to leave with her!"

After a moment of silence, Zhao Ya walked over with a determined expression.

"You're willing to leave with her?"

"That's right. I've seen everything that teacher has done for us, and I hope that one day, I'll be able to do something for you too..."

Walking forward, Zhao Ya clenched her trembling fists tightly. "And this... is an opportunity for that."

She had clearly seen everything her teacher had done for her throughout this difficult journey, and it distressed her that she was unable to do anything in return.

But now, as long as she agreed to follow the envoy, she would gain control over the immense power known as the Glacier Plain Court. With such backing, she would gain the strength to support her teacher, standing side by side with him instead of just dragging him down.

More importantly... she had some private interest in this matter as well. Perhaps... with the rise in her position, she might be able to fulfill this wish of hers.

Zhang Xuan sighed.

"You need not rush to a decision. I'll give you three days to consider it properly. No matter what you decide, you'll have my support!"

"There's no need for that, I've already thought it through and this is my decision!"

With reddened eyes, Zhao Ya kneeled onto the floor and kowtowed. "Teacher, thank you for your grooming and your support. Regardless of where I go in the future, I'll forever remain as your student!"

"Get up!"

Knowing that his student had already made up her mind, Zhang Xuan nodded his head as he pulled her up.

Eagles had to undergo tribulations before they could soar freely in the skies.

Students were the same as well.

No matter how reluctant he was, he still had to allow the harsh storms to temper her, so that she could mature and become a true expert.

"Yes!"

Zhao Ya stood up.

Since the decision was clear, there was nothing much for Zhang Xuan to hesitate over. Thus, he turned over to the envoy with menacing threat gleaming in his eyes.

"Envoy Liu Xuan, I hope that all you said is true. If I find there's any falsehood in your words and you mean my student harm, not only will I kill you, I'll eradicate the entire Glacier Plain Court as well!"

He might be weak now, but if the other party meant his student harm, he didn't mind barging into the Glacier Plain Court and wiping this power off the face of the world.

Chapter 557

Zhao Ya's Departure (2)

"Eradicate the Glacier Plain Court?"

Envoy Liu Xuan was stunned by those words.

"That's right. I mean what I say!" Zhang Xuan's gaze was indifferent, but there seemed to be some compelling authority behind it.

"This..."

If anyone else were to say such words, Envoy Liu Xuan would have surely thought that the other party had a screw loose.

After all, the overwhelming might of the Glacier Plain Court was known even throughout the entire continent. Even 9-star master teachers would dare not utter such words, let alone some 4-star master teacher.

For an insignificant figure which she could kill with a single pinch to actually utter such arrogant words...

If it was under any other circumstances, she would surely mock the other party for his arrogance. But for some reason... looking into the determined gaze of this young man, her heart couldn't help but beat with slight apprehension.

It seemed as though a subconscious part of her was saying that the young man before her... might just really do as he said!

"Don't worry, our Glacier Plain Court values its words. Reneging on promises is something we despise..."

She instinctively gave her guarantee without much thought.

"Un!" Hearing the words of the other party, Zhang Xuan felt a heavy burden weighing on his heart being released. Then, turning to Zhao Ya, he said, "If you find yourself

unable to cope there, you can come to look for me at any Master Teacher Pavilion. Don't worry, even when following behind me, you'll still become one of the strongest experts in the world!"

"Yes!"

Zhao Ya nodded her head.

"Alright, I'll be leaving then!"

Since everything was settled, there was no longer any reason for Zhang Xuan to remain here. Thus, he began walking toward the entrance.

"Teacher..."

Seeing the back of her teacher slowly disappearing in the distance, Zhao Ya knelt down and kowtowed eight times. Her determined gaze was free of any hesitation. "Teacher, I won't let you down. I'll surely become one of the strongest experts in the world!"

"You're a good student!"

Helping Zhao Ya up, Envoy Liu Xuan gazed at the silhouette in the distance and sighed. "He's a good teacher as well."

"He's the good teacher, but I'm not a good student."

Zhao Ya shook her head.

For her, he was willing to go through so much hardship. Yet, she had chosen to leave his side.

"Don't worry. Once you awaken your Pure Yin Body fully and become the court chief, it won't be difficult for you to repay your debt to him. Rather, if you were to follow behind him, you would just impede his progress. There's no banquet in this world that doesn't end. All students have to leave their teacher's side eventually; this is the way of the world. After all, one can't possibly stay behind the protection of one's teacher forever."

Envoy Liu Xuan continued, "If he had tried to forcefully keep you with him, he wouldn't

have been a good teacher."

Everyone had to grow up at some point. Even the strongest expert in the world couldn't possibly keep his student with him at all time, and even more so, the student shouldn't become completely reliant of the teacher. Only after undergoing storms could one truly become independent.

"I know that! Just that... I am reluctant to part with him!"

Zhao Ya's eyes turned red. Turning around, she walked away.

Envoy Liu Xuan knew that she would be in low spirits for a short period of time, but as long as she could turn the pain of parting into her drive, she would grow swiftly in the time to come.

Only through such experiences could she temper her mental resilience.

...

While Zhao Ya's departure wasn't planned, it wasn't beyond expectations.

In truth, Zhang Xuan had already been harboring some thoughts of having his own students train independently to temper themselves. Just that, he wasn't able to bring himself to do it.

Since such an opportunity came by, it would be a waste if he were to restrain his student instead.

Seated cross-legged in the room on top of the aerial spirit beast, Zhang Xuan was motionless as if a statue.

Ruohuan gongzi couldn't help but ask, "Teacher, it has been five days since Zhang shi has been in this state... Is he alright?"

Ever since the trio left the Glacier Plain Court, Zhang shi had been seated on the same spot, not moving in the slightest. He couldn't help but feel perplexed as to what the other party was doing.

"I've no idea either..."

Pavilion Master Kang shook his head in worry.

Knowing how much Zhang Shi cared for his students, could it be that he was in such a state due to his depression from Zhao Ya's departure?

"Wait, could this be..."

He glanced at Zhang Xuan doubtfully once more when his eyebrows suddenly shot up in disbelief.

"What's wrong, teacher?"

Noticing the peculiarity in his teacher, Ruohuan gongzi hurriedly turned his gaze over.

"This isn't due to excessive sadness but... Soul Enlightenment!" Pavilion Master Kang exclaimed.

"Soul Enlightenment?" Ruohuan gongzi was baffled.

He had never heard of such a phrase before.

"Un. Even though Zhang Shi is meditating, there isn't the slightest disturbance in the spiritual energy around him. In other words, he isn't cultivating his zhenqi. But to remain seated for five days despite not cultivating, it could only mean that he managed to dive into a state of enlightenment!" Pavilion Master Kang explained.

Even though cultivation was an extremely mundane task, it wasn't easy for one to remain completely motionless for five days straight doing nothing at all. The more plausible reason was that the other party's mind had managed to reach a unique state that propelled the maturing of his state of mind.

And this was known as Soul Enlightenment.

"Soul Enlightenment is a mental state that only comes by chance. If a master teacher succeeds in reaching such a state, his Soul Depth will increase significantly..." Pavilion Master Kang said in awe.

Given how the young man before him was able to beguile him with his Impartation of Heaven's Will, it could only mean that the other party's Soul Depth was at least the same level as his. It was difficult to imagine how powerful he would be once he broke out of

this Soul Enlightenment.

"The more powerful he is, the better it'll be. It's about time for the rise of Myriad Kingdom Alliance..."

Pavilion Master Kang's eyes glowed in anticipation.

The stronger Zhang shi became, the more likely Myriad Kingdom Alliance would achieve outstanding results in the Master Teacher Tournament. As the head of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion, having a master teacher under him achieve such astounding results could be considered as a huge honor.

The Myriad Kingdom Alliance had been suppressed for too long. It was about time... for them to cleanse away their previous shame and rise up above the other powers!

Excited, Pavilion Master Kang turned to Ruohuan gongzi and instructed, "Don't disturb Zhang shi, you should focus on your cultivation as well. Before returning to Myriad Kingdom City, you must reach Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle. Otherwise, don't bother calling me your teacher!"

"What?"

Ruohuan gongzi was dumbstruck.

What did the other party undergoing Soul Enlightenment have to do with him? Why was his teacher suddenly urging him to cultivate?

But knowing that his teacher was saying this for his own good, Ruohuan gongzi obediently sat down, took out the middle-tier spirit stone that Zhang shi gave him, and continued to cultivate.

Unlike Zhang Xuan, the significance of a middle-tier spirit stone was great to his cultivation. Just one was sufficient to raise his cultivation from Clarifying Turbidity realm primary stage to pinnacle.

As such, the spirit stone was still concentrated with spiritual energy.

...

Pavilion Master Kang's guess was spot-on, Zhang Xuan was indeed in the midst of a

Soul Enlightenment.

While the separation with Zhao Ya had left him slightly down, this experience had also given him a greater insight into the true essence the responsibilities of a teacher.

Memories of his past ever since his transmigration flashed through his head as though a movie screen. Slowly, as though a jade that was being tempered, excessive thoughts flowed out from his mind, bringing him tranquility.

Only after a heavy storm would a rainbow emerge.

While Zhao Ya's departure was a trial for her, the same could be said for Zhang Xuan as well.

As his mind broadened, his Soul Depth began rising slowly from 14.1.

Unlike the Book of Heaven's Path and Soul Tempering of a Mentor's Calligraphy which induced an instantaneous surge in his Soul Depth, Soul Enlightenment was a gradual process.

14.1!

14.2!

14.3!

...

In just five days, Zhang Xuan's Soul Depth had increased by 2.0, reaching a total of 16.1!

Hu!

He finally opened his eyes.

His gaze was composed and deep. It seemed to compel others to trust him.

A Soul Depth of 16.1 was already comparable to that of a 5-star master teacher. Previously, to beguile Pavilion Master Kang, he had to utilize words to shake the mental resilience of the other party before he could succeed. But now... as long as he

executed the Impartation of Heaven's Will, the other party would be coaxed into doing anything instantaneously.

On top of that, his Eye of Insight had also become more potent than before, allowing him to peer even deeper into all that his gaze fell upon.

At the same time, he also managed to reinforce his cultivation in the past five days. As long as he willed it, he would be able to reach Transcendent Mortal 3-dan Yin-Yang realm immediately.

"I should focus on my cultivation now..."

The rise in Soul Depth had given him a deeper insight into cultivation as a whole, thus boosting his rate of cultivation. Even though he didn't have any more middle-tier spirit stones at hand, his cultivation still rose quickly.

The Master Teacher Tournament was about to begin-he had no time to waste.

...

While Zhang Xuan and the others were busy cultivating on top of an aerial savage beast, an elder wearing a bamboo hat approached the city gates of Myriad Kingdom City.

Looking at the grand city walls, he clenched his fists tightly together.

'Myriad Kingdom City... I'm finally here! I must grasp onto this opportunity to get back what I lost and... exact my vengeance!'

A look of savagery appeared on the face of the elder as a malevolent aura shrouded him. Staring deep into his eyes, one could nearly see the frenzy and hatred that clouded his mind.

A gust of wind blew, and the left sleeve of the black robe he was wearing fluttered freely in the wind, revealing his missing arm.

If Zhang Xuan were here, he would surely have recognized the other party.

That elder was the old ancestor of Xuanyuan Kingdom, Ding Hong!

Back then, he had burned his essence blood to escape, and after three months of journey, he finally arrived at Myriad Kingdom City, the very core of the alliance!

He desired for vengeance!

The other party had actually killed his descendent and destroyed his kingdom, turning him into nothing more than a roaming vagrant now. How could he possibly simply let this grudge go?

'I mustn't go to the Alliance Head Residence. Given how even the envoy was sided toward him, it would be suicidal if I were to head there!'

Even though hatred had filled his mind, he didn't allow it to cloud his judgement. He knew very clearly what his current plight was, and to exact vengeance, recklessness was something he couldn't risk.

The envoy back then turned a blind eye to the downfall of the royal family, even going to the extent of supporting a female emperor. If he were to head to the Alliance Head Residence in an attempt to redress his grievances, the odds were that he would only be silenced.

'Given that Zhang Xuan is a master teacher, heading to the Master Teacher Pavilion is out of question too!'

Within the past month, news about the young genius becoming a 4-star master teacher and becoming a representative of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance for the Master Teacher Tournament had been spreading like wildfire. Naturally, Ding Hong had also caught wind of such news.

As a 4-star master teacher who was going to represent the Master Teacher Pavilion in the Master Teacher Tournament... wasn't it clearly a futile attempt to report the other party to the Master Teacher Pavilion?

'There isn't anyone in Myriad Kingdom City that I can rely on... Seems like I can only depend on other powers!'

Viciousness flashed across his eyes.

Even though the Alliance Head Residence and the Master Teacher Pavilion wouldn't stand up for him... Wasn't the Master Teacher Tournament just around the corner?

Since no one in the alliance would redress his grievances, he could seek the Master Teacher Pavilions from other powers!

Given the monstrous capability of that Zhang Xuan, the other powers would surely be delighted to find a reason to lay their hands on him.

Ding Hong didn't just want Zhang Xuan to die, he wanted to rip the other party's reputation to shreds as well.

'There is a total of twenty-eight powers involved in the tournament. Mingxia Empire and Henghai Empire are of equal strength to the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, so it might be difficult to render their assistance. Thus, I should approach the stronger Cascading Sand Sect and Frigid Gale Sect, or perhaps, even the strongest Fleeting Cloud Sect!' Ding Hong thought.

As the previous emperor of a Conferred Kingdom, he had a clear picture on the various powers located in the vicinity of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance.

Chapter 558

Ding Hong's Scheme

Even though this Fleeting Cloud Sect was only a sect, it had a total of five half 5-star master teachers. Of the seventy-seven Master Teacher Tournaments held, it had been the champion thirty-six times.

On the other hand, the best result the Myriad Kingdom Alliance had achieved so far was only twenty-third place, fifth from the bottom.

It was due to this that Ding Mu had wanted to be initiated into the Fleeting Cloud Sect back then.

'As long as I can render their assistance, it wouldn't be a problem for me to become the new alliance head, needless to say, exact vengeance!'

A menacing gleam flickered across Ding Hong's eyes.

Given the strength of the Fleeting Cloud Sect, there would be no one who would dare to oppose him in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance.

'However, to them, I am no better than an ant. Without paying a suitable price, it'll be impossible to goad them into action.'

Naturally, it was impossible to render the help of those behemoths so easily. Without sufficient benefits on the table, it would be impossible to drive them into action.

Not to mention, dealing with Zhang Xuan meant making an enemy out of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. Ding Hong knew that he held insufficient weight to get them to go that far.

If he was still a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan cultivator, they might still have spared him a glance. However, the burning of his blood essence had caused his cultivation to drop to the Zhizun realm. With his current level of cultivation, he was no better than an ant before those immense behemoths. He was an existence that they could easily crush to death.

'Unless... I use that news as leverage to strike a deal with them!'

Ding Hong's eyes turned cold as he recalled what Ding Mu had said to him previously.

His grandson had once talked to him about the matter after he got into trouble. The reason why he got into a fight with that Zhang Xuan was due to a treasure the latter had in his possession-a treasure that would send any master teacher into a frenzy.

'Kong shi's handwritten letter! There's no master teacher who wouldn't be moved by this artifact. If I were to reveal this news to the Fleeting Cloud Sect, even if I don't say much about the matter, they would surely be driven into action!'

Ding Hong gritted his teeth tightly.

Kong shi's handwritten letter one of the greatest treasures a master teacher could obtain. Ding Hong didn't think that anyone could resist its allure, not even those half 5-star master teachers of Fleeting Cloud Sect.

Zhang Xuan would surely become a target for all of these powers if he were to leak the news.

Just as Ding Hong was in the midst of looking for the Fleeting Cloud Sect's dwelling place, a thought suddenly struck him.

'No, this won't do. Given the strength of the Fleeting Cloud Sect, once they learn of the news, they would surely try to silence me so as to prevent any news from getting out...'

If the Fleeting Cloud Sect decided to kill him so as to seal off the news, he wouldn't be able to retaliate at all.

After all, given the importance of Kong shi's handwritten letter, it would be best if fewer people knew of it.

Not to mention, a 4-star master teacher was involved in the matter as well.

"Actually, why don't I send a message each to Fleeting Cloud Sect, Mingxia Empire, Henghai Empire, Cascading Sand Sect, Frigid Gale Sect? If I were to send them letters simultaneously and invite all of their heads out at once, they could curb one another. If so, it would become difficult for them to kill me!"

Regardless, Ding Hong used to be the emperor of a Conferred Kingdom. Politics was like a second nature to him, and it didn't take him long to find a solution to the problem. "After all, it doesn't matter to me who receives Kong shi's handwritten letter eventually!"

His main goal was to kill Zhang Xuan and take back his country. Even if he were to obtain Kong shi's handwritten letter, it would be completely useless to him. Since that was the case, he might as well use it as a trading term.

"Alright, I'll do just that then..."

After analyzing the matter carefully and confirming that there was no problem-he would be able to ensure his safety while getting his vengeance-Ding Hong nodded his head in satisfaction. Walking into the streets, he soon vanished amidst the huge crowd.

...

It was an ordinary-looking mansion sitting in the middle of Myriad Kingdom City, but all of the participating powers in the Master Teacher Tournament knew that it was currently resided by the most popular contender for the champion placing, Fleeting Cloud Sect.

The Fleeting Cloud Sect was created by a half 5-star master teacher, Mo Liuyun. While it was considered to be a branch of the Master Teacher Pavilion, it was also an independent entity that was no different from the other empires.

Within the sect, only master teachers had the qualification to become the sect leader or take on high-standing roles. However, it was still densely populated by members of the other occupations as well. In fact, there were quite a handful of Transcendent Mortal 5-dan experts within their members.

This was the reason why the Fleeting Cloud Sect was considered to be the number one power among the twenty-eight in the region.

Luo Xuan, as the greatest genius of Fleeting Cloud Sect, was the most popular contender for champion of this Master Teacher Tournament. He was only twenty-nine this year, but his cultivation had already reached Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle.

At the current moment, the person in question had just completed his cultivation. Stretching his back lazily, he walked out of the room.

"Senior!"

But before he could get far, a young man suddenly rushed up to him.

"What's wrong?"

Luo Xuan frowned.

"Reporting to senior, someone has just delivered a letter, saying to deliver it to the sect leader!" The young man said.

"Is my teacher a person whom anyone could just send a letter to?" Luo Xuan flung his sleeves.

The leader of the Fleeting Cloud Sect, Luo Huang, happened to be his teacher.

As a half 5-star master teacher possessing a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 5-dan Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle... It was beneath him to allow just anyone to send him a letter.

"Where's the letter?"

After harrumphing, Luo Xuan stretched out his hand.

"Here it is..."

The young man passed it over.

Luo Xuan was just about to tear it open when the young man hurriedly said, "The person who delivered the letter said that there's a special seal on the letter! If it isn't the sect leader who opens it, it will be destroyed immediately..."

"You actually believe this kind of nonsense? If there's truly a seal, do you think that I, as a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, wouldn't notice it?"

Luo Xuan harrumphed.

As a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, he possessed exceptionally sharp eyes. If the other party had truly left something of that sort on the letter, there was no reason why he wouldn't notice it. But it was clear that there was nothing at all-the other party was

just trying to hoodwink the ignorant.

Ssssla!

Tearing the letter open, Luo Xuan saw a card in it.

Lowering his head to take a glance, a frown crept onto Luo Xuan's forehead.

There was only a line of word written on the card: In three days' time at Sea Gazing Gazebo. News regarding Kong shi's relic.

There was no signing off, and there was no name either.

Even the handwriting looked messy. Clearly, the other party had found someone to write in his place.

Keeping the card, Luo Xuan asked with a frown, "Who is the one who delivered the letter?"

"It's a man dressed in black robe. I didn't catch a good look at his appearance," the young man quickly replied.

"Where is he?"

"He has already left..." the young man answered.

"Alright. Don't speak of this matter to anyone else. I'll go look for teacher right now!" Luo Xuan instructed before heading to the centermost residence in the residence. It didn't take too long for him to arrive at his destination.

In the courtyard, a middle-aged man was currently in the midst of executing a fist art. His movements were slow, but the powerful wind generated with every single punch of his created a huge pressure on those looking at it.

The leader of the Fleeting Cloud Sect, Luo Huang!

The strongest expert of the twenty-seven powers neighboring the Myriad Kingdom Alliance.

Upon seeing the other party's arrival, Sect Leader Luo Huang retracted his fist and

smiled, "You're here!"

"Teacher!"

Luo Xuan clasped his fist and said, "Someone has just delivered a letter..."

"A letter?" Wiping his sweat with a towel, Luo Huang turned to look at Luo Xuan.

He knew this disciple of his very well; if it wasn't for something important, it was impossible for the latter to pay him such an abrupt visit.

To interrupt his cultivation for a single letter, the letter had to be of the utmost importance.

"Yes..." Luo Xuan passed the card over.

"Kong shi's relic?" Taking a look, Sect Leader Luo Huang frowned. "What's your view on it?"

"Given that this matter concerns Kong shi, I think that it is unlikely to be a lie. Besides... it's better to be safe than sorry for such matters!" Luo Xuan replied.

"Empyrean Kong shi didn't leave behind too many personal possessions when he departed. If what that is written on the note is true, then regardless of what the relic is, its value will be, in the truest sense, priceless! Becoming a 5-star master teacher wouldn't be a problem at all if I can obtain it!"

Sect Leader Luo Huang nodded his head.

Kong shi was the founder of the Master Teacher Pavilion, the very first master teacher in the world. No matter how insignificant the relic he left behind was, just the essence that it harnessed could bring unimaginable benefits to those in possession of it.

Regardless of whether the content of the note was true or not, this was an opportunity they couldn't pass up.

"This means that..."

Luo Xuan gazed at his teacher to confirm his intention.

"Of course, we have to take a look!" Sect Leader Luo Huang nodded his head. "Right, where is this Sea Gazing Gazebo?"

"It's the most famous and bustling tavern in Myriad Kingdom City. Most probably, the other party is hoping to make use of the crowd to protect himself," Luo Xuan replied.

As a 4-star master teacher, how could he possibly be unable to discern the little schemes the other party had in mind?

"That probably isn't just it!" Sect Leader Luo Huang contemplated for a moment before shaking his head.

"Not just it? What does teacher mean?" Luo Xuan was in bewilderment.

"Simple. Since the other party delivered the letter to us, the chances are that they delivered it to others as well. Most probably, he intends to gather all of us at the Sea Gazing Gazebo in hopes of jacking up the price for his information!" Sect Leader Luo Huang said.

"Jacking up the prices? Damn it, I'll send someone to capture that fellow immediately..."

Narrowing his eyes, Luo Xuan came to a realization and immediately prepared to rush out of the room.

As one of the strongest powers in the region, wealth was not something the Fleeting Cloud Sect was lacking.

The only fear they had was that... this news wasn't exclusive.

If the other powers were to learn of the existence of Kong Shi's relic and vied with them over it, they would be forced into a very troublesome position.

In fact, out of bitterness of failing to obtain the relic, some might even leak the news to the headquarters. If so, all of the efforts spent on vying for the relic would have ended in vain.

"There's no need for that. It's already too late!" Sect Leader Luo Huang shook his head. "Putting aside how the one who delivered the letter is unlikely to be the one spearheading the entire matter, even if he is, you can't guarantee that we're the first

one that he visited... Perhaps, the other powers might have already learnt of the matter!"

"Then... What do we do?" Luo Xuan asked in a panic.

Sect Leader Luo Huang waved his hands.

"Suppress the news, don't let anyone learn of it. In three days, you will accompany me to the Sea Gazing Gazebo. I would like to see who that person is personally, and which of Kong shi's relics he possesses information of! If it turns out to be a farce, even if we remain idle, I believe the other powers would be more than willing to make the other party understand what living hell is like!"

"Yes!" Luo Xuan nodded.

The same sight was also occurring in the dwelling of the other powers.

Mingxia Empire, Henghai Empire, Cascading Sand Sect, Frigid Gale Sect, White Helios Sect, Spiraling Cosmos Sect...

The top few powers who had come to attend the Master Teacher Tournament had received the same letter, and the leaders of the respective groups had seen the content on the card.

All of the powers immediately became restless. The experts of the various powers were waiting expectantly for what that was to come in three days. They wanted to see what kind of incredible person had delivered them the letter, and what news of Kong shi's relic he had with him.

While all of this was happening, Zhang Xuan was sitting by the side of the window in the room on top of the aerial spirit beast. He was looking at the fleeting white clouds and mountains with a depressed look.

"Since they have taken away my student, I should have asked them for some spirit stones as compensation... Even if not that, if I had offered that Envoy Liu Xuan some pointers, I could have probably earned a hefty sum as well! How could I have been so dumb?"

"Offer Envoy Liu Xuan some pointers?"

Looking at the regretful expression on the other party's face and the mutterings that came out from his mouth, Pavilion Master Kang's body stiffened.

Chapter 559

Ding Hong's Condition

Zhang Xuan felt deep regret.

To him, every single middle-tier spirit stone was an extraordinarily valuable commodity... However, to that Envoy Liu Xuan, given how powerful she was and that she came from the headquarters, it could very well be no different from spare change!

It was a pity that when Zhao Ya left, Zhang Xuan was a little overwhelmed by self-reproach. On top of that, his pride also didn't allow him to lower his head-he didn't want others to think that he was selling his student off for spirit stones... But still, he couldn't help but feel that it was a great pity given his current plight.

Even if not for his student... he could request for spirit stones just by offering the other party pointers!

There was no flaw which was beyond the heavens. Through the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan was confident that he would be able to offer invaluable advice to the other party on her cultivation and receive some compensation in exchange.

With this compensation, his cultivation from there onward would be smooth-sailing. He wouldn't have to worry about the lack in resources anymore. His students would also be entitled to the best training resources as well...

But to miss the opportunity by like that...

"Forget it, there's no use crying over spilt milk..."

Knowing that it would be difficult for him to meet another expert of Envoy Liu Xuan's caliber once more, Zhang Xuan decided to let the matter go. He then turned to Pavilion Master Kang and asked, "Pavilion master, may I know who possesses the most middle-tier spirit stones in Myriad Kingdom City?"

"Middle-tier spirit stones?"

Pavilion Master Kang was taken aback. "These items are cultivation necessities. Every prestigious clan would at least have one or two in their possession... But if you're talking about who possesses the most middle-tier spirit stones, it could only be those powers who have traveled here to participate in the Master Teacher Tournament!"

"Powers?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

Pavilion Master Kang contemplated for a moment before saying, "Indeed. The Myriad Kingdom Alliance is considered weak even among its own tier. As such, the quantity of middle-tier spirit stones it can obtain from Huanyu Empire is severely limited. On the other hand, the Fleeting Cloud Sect, White Helios Sect, and Spiraling Cosmos Sect, due to their overwhelming strength and the backing of half 5-star master teachers, obtained the most middle-tier spirit stones each time. While it would be difficult for me to even take out three of them, their pavilion masters or sect leaders would be able to easily take out a dozen or even more!"

"So many?"

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

If he could obtain a dozen or so, he would surely be able to reach Transcendent Mortal 3-dan Yin-Yang realm pinnacle easily. Complementing such strength with his soul cultivation, he would be a match for even Transcendent Mortal 5-dan experts.

Cupping his lower jaw, Zhang Xuan thought, 'It seems like I must find an opportunity to plunder some from them... '

Looking at the other party's expression, the edges of Pavilion Master Kang's lips twitched.

Those are powerful sects and empires! It is already a huge blessing that they aren't plundering from us, and yet, you still hope to steal spirit stones from them?

"Cough cough. Zhang shi, the minimum cultivation required for a half 5-star master teacher is the Consonant Spirit realm. Such experts possess astounding strength that we can't hope to match up to. Furthermore... our Myriad Kingdom Alliance can't be said to be in friendly relations with them..."

Afraid that this fellow might really do something insane, Pavilion Master Kang couldn't help but advise him from the side.

In the Consonant Spirit realm, through the nurturing of one's soul and its harmonization with the flesh, one's fighting prowess would be multiplied.

It is one thing for them to not cause trouble in Myriad Kingdom City, and yet, you still dare to set your gaze on their spirit stones... Aren't you just looking for trouble?

"Don't worry, I won't go overboard!"

Zhang Xuan nodded his head before falling into deep thought.

It would be clearly impossible for him to steal the spirit stones from them. While his cultivation did advance greatly recently, he was still a way off from being able to match a Consonant Spirit realm cultivator.

If he were to utilize all of his means, he might still be able to match a Consonant Spirit realm primary stage cultivator. However, against an intermediate stage or even higher, the only course of action he could take was to escape as far as he could.

From Pavilion Master Kang's words, it seemed like these sects had plenty of Consonant Spirit realm intermediate stage and advanced stage cultivators.

But while Zhang Xuan couldn't fight them squarely, hoodwinking them shouldn't be a problem.

Back then, in Tianxuan Kingdom, when his pockets were completely empty, and his cultivation was low, didn't he still manage to convince innumerable experts to bow down willingly to Yang shi?

"Seems like I have to find a way to get to them and offer them guidance or cure their illnesses so as to earn some middle-tier spirit stones..."

Zhao Ya's departure had given him a drive like never before.

If he was sufficiently strong, he would be able to easily obtain the cultivation resources his students needed-there would be no need for his own students to follow behind others!

In the end, it all boiled down to him being weak.

Without sufficient strength, everything else was just empty talk.

Thus, his priority at hand was to gather as many middle-tier spirit stones as possible and raise his cultivation.

...

While Zhang Xuan was planning to sweep away the spirit stones of those sects and empires, Sect Leader Luo Huang and Luo Xuan arrived at the Sea Gazing Gazebo.

"Sect Leader Luo, why are you here too?"

Before they could walk into the tavern, they heard a surprised exclaim. Turning around, they saw a middle-aged man standing not too far away.

It was the leader of White Helios Sect, Bai Kaizhi.

A Consonant Spirit realm advanced stage expert, half 5-star master teacher.

"Sect Leader Bai, you're here too!" Having guessed this much, Sect Leader Luo Huang wasn't surprised in the least. On the contrary, he chuckled softly.

"You were the one who sent the letter to me?" Seeing the other party's confident expression, Sect Leader Bai was perplexed.

"I am not so bored as to waste my time with this. If I really managed to obtain news of Kong shi's relic, I would have surely claimed it for my own already. Do you think I would waste my words with you?" Sect Leader Luo Huang shook his head. "Most probably, we aren't the only ones that he contacted. I wonder who is the mastermind behind this matter. In any case, let's head in first!"

"Un!" Sect Leader Bai was stunned for a moment before comprehending the situation. He nodded his head, and the duo walked into the tavern side-by-side.

As soon as they walked in, they immediately saw several familiar silhouettes. Of the twenty-seven powers that came to Myriad Kingdom City, fourteen were gathered here!

Furthermore, the mastermind clearly did his homework. These fourteen powers were ranked at the front among the twenty-eight powers in the region.

Asking around, they realized that everyone that had gathered here had received the same letter that spoke of Kong shi's relic. To Sect Leader Luo Huang's disappointment,

no one seemed to know any more than that. The mastermind who sent the letters to the all of them and the relic mentioned within the card remained a mystery to everyone.

"Could this be a hoax?" Someone expressed their doubt.

"Unlikely. Even though we aren't based in Myriad Kingdom City, given our combined influence, it would just be a matter of time before we catch onto the traces of that person!"

A sect leader harrumphed. "Thus, it's impossible unless... he's tired of living!"

Given how even the Lin Clan from the Tianwu Kingdom could easily bring out search tools such as the Seeking Mouse, it wouldn't be too hard for powerful influences like them to trace down a person.

The only reason why they hadn't done so was because they didn't wish to take any risks-after all, Kong shi relic was at stake here.

"That's true. Let's continue waiting then!"

Finding those words logical, the crowd decided to wait a while longer.

Those that had gathered here were all master teachers, and even the weakest of them was at 4-star pinnacle. Patience was one thing that they didn't lack.

"Greetings. I am the one who gathered all of you here today!"

Soon, a deep voice echoed, and a one-armed elder walked into the tavern.

Ding Hong didn't try to conceal anything at all; an appearance of an elder in his sixties, a cultivation of Zhizun realm, and a face that looked incredibly ragged. With a look, one could easily tell that he had suffered grievous injuries and had yet to recover from them.

Everyone turned their eyes over.

They thought that a person who dared to gather all of them here would have to be at least a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert or even higher... To think that it would only be an insignificant Zhizun realm cultivator. Everyone couldn't help but

frown.

"Pardon me for inviting all of you here so abruptly. Just as what was written in the card, I'm here to offer you news on... Kong shi's relic!"

Ding Hong surveyed the crowd as he said those words.

He knew that there was no disguise he could don nor lie he could spout that would fool a half 5-star master teacher. Since that was the case, he might as well come out clean. In any case, with the secret he held, he need not fear being silenced.

"Kong shi's relic? Before you go on any further, I would you to take note of who you are standing before. If there's any falsehood in your words, I believe little has to be said of your plight!"

Flinging his sleeves, Sect Leader Luo Huang harrumphed.

"I understand, and I can assure you that there are no lies in my words... The relic I am speaking of refers to Kong shi's handwritten letter!" Ding Hong clasped his fist and reported.

"Kong shi's handwritten letter?"

Everyone jolted in shock.

There were many incredible weapons among Kong shi's relic, but to a master teacher, there was nothing that could be more valuable than his handwritten letter.

Such letters usually harnessed the essence, spirit, and soul of the writer. By studying the characters in it often, one's Soul Depth could rise quickly. No treasure could possibly rival that.

"Indeed. Back then, the ancestor of a small clan once saved the life of Sage Min, and in gratitude to that small clan, Kong shi personally wrote a letter to them. Ever since then, the letter had been passed down from generation to generation as a family heirloom," Ding Hong said.

"Sage Min?"

"You mean one of the 72 Sages of Kong shi's disciples?"

"He's one of the founder of the Master Teacher Pavilion, and very few know not of his name! If what you said is true, the value of that handwritten letter is indeed priceless!"

"Putting everything aside, if one were to seek Sage Min's descendants with that letter in hand, the latter would surely honor one as an esteemed guest..."

"Indeed... "

Hearing those words, everyone's breathing hastened.

Of Kong shi's three thousand known disciples, the most formidable of them were known as the 72 Sages. As one of the 72 Sages, Sage Min had participated in the founding of the Master Teacher Pavilion, and he was honored by all master teachers for such.

To have saved such a person and obtained Kong shi's handwritten letter...

Disregarding the value of the handwritten letter in itself, just the story behind it would make countless experts wrestle with one another over it.

Suppressing his hastened breathing, Sect Leader Luo Huang lifted his head and asked, "Alright, what are your conditions?"

Hearing those words, everyone in the room fell silent.

Indeed. Since the other party went through so much effort to gather all of them here, surely, he must have his own motives. In fact, they would feel unnerved if he didn't.

"Sect Leader Luo is indeed a candid person!"

Ding Hong chuckled lightly. "My conditions are simple. Firstly, I wish to become the alliance head of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. Secondly, I want my cultivation to reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle! Last but not least, I want you to kill a person for me. Don't worry, the strength of this person isn't too high-just a Transcendent Mortal 2-dan primary stage cultivator. Whoever promises me these three matters, I'll tell you the whereabouts of Kong shi's relic."

"The alliance head of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance is supported by the Myriad Kingdom City Master Teacher Pavilion. Even though I can't interfere in the matters of Myriad Kingdom Alliance directly, Pavilion Master Kang should still defer to me on

this matter. After all, changing an alliance head wouldn't harm the foundations of the empire. It shouldn't be too difficult to achieve this," Sect Leader Luo Huang said. "As for your cultivation, as long as you follow my guidance strictly, there's an eighty percent chance that you can reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle... As for the assassination, I can agree to it too."

"Sect Leader Luo, there's no need to be so hasty. We possess the capability to do as much as well. I believe no one here intends to give up on Kong shi's relic!"

"Indeed. This friend here, on top of becoming the alliance head of Myriad Kingdom Alliance, our Spiraling Cosmos Sect can make you an honorary elder. You'll be entitled to equivalent privileges as them!"

"Our Frigid Gale Sect also agrees to your conditions. On top of that, we can offer you five middle-tier spirit stones and fifteen Transcendent Mortal 2-dan female disciples..."

...

An uproar immediately burst within the Sea Gazing Gazebo.

Chapter 560

Greed Drives a Human's Heart

No one expected the other party's conditions to be so simple.

The position of alliance head in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, raising the cultivation to Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle, and killing a Transcendent Mortal 2-dan primary stage cultivator. There was no rational person who would turn down such terms.

Compared to Kong shi's handwritten letter, those were nothing at all.

"Everyone, calm down!"

Just as everyone was speaking excitedly, vying with one another for the slot, Ding Hong surveyed the crowd and said, "Allow me to finish my words first before making your decisions!"

In an instant, the room fell silent.

"Even though the person I want you to kill isn't too strong, his identity is a little unique. He's a master teacher, and... he's representing the Myriad Kingdom Alliance for the Master Teacher Tournament as well!" Ding Hong said.

"A master teacher representing Myriad Kingdom Alliance? You mean... Master Teacher Zhang Xuan whose name has been going around recently?"

Everyone was taken aback.

While they didn't pay much attention to the candidates of Myriad Kingdom Alliance, they did happen to hear of Zhang Xuan's name.

Despite being under twenty, he triumphed in the selection round and became a 4-star master teacher on the spot. This had caused quite a commotion in Myriad Kingdom City.

To kill a public figure, not to mention, a 4-star master teacher at that?

Those who were still smiling a moment ago immediately turned grim.

Master teachers were forbidden from killing one another. If the headquarters were to learn of it, the consequences would be disastrous.

Not to mention, this fellow's name had been on the rise recently. If any harm were to come to him at this moment, the most likely suspects would be them.

Frowning, Sect Leader Luo Huang asked, "What grudge do you have with Zhang shi?"

While master teachers were forbidden from killing one another, there were exceptions to the rule. It had to meet at least one of the following criteria:

- 1) The grudge between both sides had reached an irreconcilable stage.
- 2) The master teacher had committed a deed against the master teacher moral code.
- 3) The master teacher had shown severe disrespect toward a higher ranked master teacher through their words or actions.

...

These were also the fundamental rules of the Master Teacher Pavilion... Devoid of camaraderie-kill! Devoid of morals-kill! Devoid of respect-kill!

As role models, master teachers were expected to conduct themselves with the highest of values. It was also for this reason that the Master Teacher Pavilion was so respected throughout the continent.

Gritting his teeth, Ding Hong roared furiously, "He killed my kin and destroyed my country. Unless he dies... my hatred will never be quelled!"

For an esteemed elder of a country like him to end up wandering around as though a lost vagrant, not daring to return back to his homeland... It was all that fellow's fault!

"Your hatred will never be quelled unless he dies? Good!"

Seeing the lack of falsehood in the old man's expression, Sect Leader Luo Huang

heaved a sigh of relief. "I can help you raise your cultivation to Transcendent Mortal 3-dan swiftly so that you could exact your vengeance personally. What do you think of it?"

Since the other party had an irreconcilable grudge against Zhang Shi, under the first condition to killing a master teacher, he was allowed to raise the other party's cultivation so that the other party could exact his vengeance.

After all, given the grudge between the two, as long as it was a fair duel, the Master Teacher Pavilion wouldn't be able to object to it.

"Indeed!"

"Why didn't I think of that?"

"Sect Leader Luo is indeed sharp..."

Hearing those words, everyone slapped their foreheads.

As long as they didn't make a move themselves, they wouldn't have to take responsibility for this matter. Even if the headquarters wished to punish someone for the matter, the blame wouldn't fall on them.

"This is a good idea, however... there is something very bizarre about that fellow. I fear that I won't be a match for him!"

Ding Hong shook his head.

The other party's offer was extremely tempting, but having fought with the other party himself, he knew that the other party possessed incredible means.

Despite possessing the cultivation of a Transcendent Mortal 1-dan, he actually lost to a Half-Transcension lad. From that experience, he felt that he wouldn't be a match for the other party even if he were to reach Yin-Yang realm.

And once that happened, he would be a goner.

"You fear that you won't be a match? In other words, you want us to kill him in your stead?"

Luo Huang frowned.

"That's right!" Ding Hong nodded in affirmation.

"This..." The crowd fell silent.

If the other party was just an insignificant figure, killing him wouldn't result in any repercussions. However, the other party just had to be a participant of the Master Teacher Tournament, not to mention, a famous one.

If they were to make a move, the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion would surely retaliate. Once this matter reaches the headquarter, even the strongest Fleeting Cloud Sect would be unable to bear the consequences.

"I'll be honest, Kong shi's handwritten letter isn't in my hands now. No matter who he is, as long as he promises me to accomplish these two matters for me after obtaining the handwritten letter, I'll tell him where it is now."

Seeing the hesitation in everyone's eyes, Ding Hong pushed on.

"It isn't difficult for us to make you the new alliance head and raise your cultivation. However, the matter regarding Zhang shi... has huge repercussions. Even our Fleeting Cloud Sect would have to give this matter some serious consideration!"

Sect Leader Luo Huang contemplated for a moment before replying, "Since that's the case, why don't you tell us where the handwritten letter is first? We will discuss our next course of action after that. If we deem it to be worth the risk, you can count on us for it. Even if it isn't, we'll still fulfill the other two conditions you asked for."

Killing a 4-star master teacher was no joke. Such a matter couldn't be decided on a whim. Thus, they decided to put the matter aside for now and focus on the location of the handwritten letter first.

"Indeed. Don't worry, there are so many of us here. We won't risk damaging our credibility over a small matter like this!" another sect leader said.

"Besides, the handwritten letter isn't in your hands. That lowers the value of your information!" another added.

If Kong shi's handwritten were really in the old man's hands, then even if they had to

face the wrath of the headquarters, it would still be worth the risk... But given that the letter was in the hands of another... Just a piece of information couldn't guarantee that they would be able to obtain the handwritten letter. Since that was the case, they had to give the matter some more thoughts.

After all, it was one thing if they were the only ones to know of the information. However, given that so many people knew of the matter, if something were to happen to Zhang shi, there was a high chance that an information leak might occur. If so, not only would they be unable to keep Kong shi's handwritten letter, it might even bring about a great disaster for their sect.

"I believe the honor of all of the master teachers here. To speak of the truth, Kong shi's handwritten letter is with Zhang Xuan at this very moment. He stole it away from me, cutting my arm off in the process even... As long as you kill him, you'll be able to obtain the handwritten letter!"

Ding Hong spoke of the words that he had prepared beforehand.

"Zhang shi stole the handwritten letter from you?"

"He was the one who cut off your arm?"

Everyone was stunned for a moment before frenzied joy gushed into them.

As master teachers, they could tell that Ding Hong wasn't being completely honest here... But all of that didn't matter to them at this moment.

The important matter at hand was him admitting that the handwritten letter was stolen by Zhang Xuan.

That, in itself, was a breach of the moral code of master teachers. This was sufficient to warrant his death.

"Tell us more about the matter. If it's indeed true, Zhang shi would have breached the master teacher moral code. As master teachers, we have the responsibility to purge black sheep like him!" Sect Leader Luo Huang declared righteously.

"Indeed! If you have any grievances, feel free to speak. All of those here today are the noblest of master teachers. If the other party had truly exploited his own identity to oppress you, we will definitely redress your grievances!"

"Such a person mustn't be allowed to remain in the Master Teacher Pavilion!"

Another two master teachers bellowed out.

Most of those seated knew that the matter wasn't that simple. However, seeing the look of determination the eyes of the various sect leaders, they could only sigh and shake their heads.

Even they themselves found it hard to resist the allure of Kong shi's handwritten letter.

"Since everyone is interested in the matter, allow me to speak of it then!"

With reddened eyes, Ding Hong began recounting the matter. "The relic belongs to Qu Clan, and our Ding Clan has been close friends with the Qu Clan for many generations now. In fact, we even once co-governed Xuanyuan Kingdom. Unfortunately, the Qu Clan couldn't withstand the trial of time and slowly went into decline. Just three years ago, the final successor of the Qu Clan came and entrusted the relic to us before passing away."

At which, Ding Hong's eyes suddenly burned in fury. "But who could have known that Zhang Xuan would learn of it. He barged into my great grandson's inauguration ceremony, killed him, and stole the handwritten letter. He even tried to silence me. If not for an escaping art that I practiced, I might have died then!"

Clenching his jaws tightly together, Ding Hong roared furiously in anger, "To conceal the vile deeds he committed for Kong shi's handwritten letter, he created all kinds of excuses to justify his actions! It's fortunate that the heavens took pity on me and I managed to survive the ordeal. Otherwise, the truth would have never seen the light of the day!"

Given that the target he was hoping to have killed was a master teacher, he knew that he had to come up with a sufficient reason for the others to justify their actions.

Thus, he crafted this story.

It was their Ding Clan who tried to snatch the handwritten letter from Lu Chong, but he twisted the story to blame Zhang Xuan for all that happened instead. Only this way would these master teachers be willing to kill Zhang Xuan in his stead.

"Atrocious! How could there be such a person among us?"

"How in the world did such an immoral person become a master teacher?"

"He must be taught a lesson! We must instill in him the dignity a teacher should have..."

"That explains why the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion had always ranked at the bottom. It's time to do some reorganizing to clear up such degenerating culture!"

...

Hearing Ding Hong's words, the master teachers were infuriated.

"Sect Leader Luo, I suggest that we confront Zhang Xuan at this instant to have him explain this matter!"

"That's right! We should have him hand over the handwritten letter as well. It's an insult to Kong shi to have such an immoral person to hold onto his relic!"

"Indeed! I share your thoughts as well!"

...

Everyone turned their eyes to Sect Leader Luo Huang.

"All of your words make sense. A master teacher must be upright to guide others. But of course, we can't only listen to one side of the story. We should also hear Zhang shi's defense. If it is true that he breached the master teacher moral code, we mustn't let him off the hook even if the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion sides with him!"

Sect Leader Luo announced righteously as he flung his sleeves.

"Alright, let's go over to confront him now!"

Everyone nodded their heads in agreement.

Seeing that he had everyone's support, Sect Leader Luo Huang nodded his head in satisfaction. He then turned to Ding Hong and asked, "This friend over here, why don't you follow us there? Until the truth of this matter is revealed, you shall be the most esteemed guest of our Fleeting Cloud Sect. No one will dare to do you any harm!"

"Alright!"

A savage gleam flashed across Ding Hong's eyes.

"Zhang shi lives in a residence in the vicinity of the Alliance Head Residence. I know where it is, allow me to lead the way!" one of the master teachers shouted before walking at the front.

Since they had already come to a decision, the crowd followed behind him and walked out of the Sea Gazing Gazebo, headed for Zhang Xuan's residence.

Seeing the grand line-up here, Luo Xuan couldn't help but shake his head.

Given that everyone knew that Kong shi's handwritten letter was with Zhang shi, how could this 'trial' be fair?

Regardless of whether Zhang shi admits to it or not, one thing was for sure-he would surely be unable to keep the handwritten letter.

Chapter 561

Sun Qiang Evicts

A beautiful figure walked over to Zhang Xuan's current residence-the princess of the alliance, Zhao Feiwu.

Upon seeing her, Sun Qiang hurried forward and said with a bitter smile, "Princess, the young master isn't back yet..."

Ever since the young master's departure, Princess Zhao had been visiting once every few days. This residence was on the verge of becoming her permanent dwelling already.

"I know. I'm just here to walk around..."

Hearing those words, disappointment clearly flickered across Zhao Feiwu's face for a moment, but she quickly hid it with a smile.

Knowing that this princess harbored exceptional feelings for the young master, Sun Qiang hurriedly said, "Princess, there's no need for you to worry. I'll immediately send someone to inform you as soon as the young master is back..."

"Alright!" Zhao Feiwu nodded her head, and just as she was about to speak, she suddenly caught someone walking toward the residence from the distance out of the corner of her eye. It was the garden owner of the Southern Herb Garden, Xue Yiyao.

This garden owner was known for her eccentric personality and her headstrong personality, bending to none, even the Alliance Head Residence. Why would she suddenly come here?

Perplexed, Zhao Feiwu asked, "May I know the reason for Garden Owner Xue's sudden visit?"

"Zhang shi has resuscitated my Earth Vein Spirit Vine, thus saving my entire field of medicinal herbs. I'm here to thank him for the favor," Garden Owner Xue said.

In the past few days, the spirit of the new Earth Vein Spirit Vine had successfully fused with the original one, thus allowing it to recover. All of the withering medicinal herbs returned back to perfect health, and only then did Garden Owner Xue finally affirm that Zhang Shi's solution was truly effective. Thus, she decided to make this visit to thank him once more.

Even though she had given him many spirit herbs in compensation, but compared to the entire field of medicinal herbs, that was truly not worth mentioning at all.

"Zhang Shi is out training for the Master Teacher Tournament, and he isn't back yet..." Sun Qiang explained.

Instead of telling others that he was heading for the Yin-Yang Lake, Zhang Xuan told others that he was going to go out to train instead. This could ensure that the news wouldn't leak out and thus prevent sabotage from other participants.

"Training?" Garden Owner Xue was taken aback. "Alright then. I'll pay a visit once more when Zhang Shi returns!"

Since Zhang Shi wasn't around, there was no point to her staying here. Thus, she prepared to turn around to leave.

But just then, she suddenly felt an overwhelmingly powerful aura behind her, exerting an immense pressure on her.

"Is Zhang Shi in? Sect Leader Luo Huang of Fleeting Cloud Sect, Sect Leader Bai Kaizhi of White Helios Sect, Sect Leader Huang Qi of Cascading Sand Sect... A total of fourteen sect leaders and nation elders are here. Ask him to come out to pay his respects!"

A clear bellow reverberated in the area, trembling even the clouds.

Very few people knew that Zhang Xuan had left Myriad Kingdom City.

On top of that, these powers didn't think of that rising master teacher as a potential opponent, so they didn't pay much attention to him. As such, they didn't know that the other party wasn't around.

"Fourteen sect leaders and nation elders were here to visit?"

"What are they up to?"

"Zhang shi is a master teacher of our Myriad Kingdom Alliance. Why are they finding him for?"

...

When that voice echoed in the air, many guards and soldiers who heard those words were stunned.

Zhang shi was going to represent the entire Myriad Kingdom Alliance in the Master Teacher Tournament. Why was this group of people looking for him?

Sun Qiang, Zhao Feiwu, and Garden Owner Xue traded glances, and they immediately noted that something was amiss.

Even if they wanted to pay Zhang shi a visit, it was impossible for fourteen heads of their respective powers to visit simultaneously. It was certain that they were up to something.

After a moment of hesitation, Sun Qiang stepped forward and greeted the group, "Guests, the young master is not around at the moment!"

An elder waved his hands majestically.

"Not around? Hah, more like you are hiding him! You'd better bring him out, or else don't blame us for conducting a search on our own accord."

Kong shi's handwritten letter was simply too precious to them. What if that fellow were to escape after hearing of the news?

"Search?"

Sun Qiang frowned. "The young master is an esteemed 4-star master teacher who will be representing the Myriad Kingdom Alliance in the Master Teacher Tournament. For all of you to come knocking and even threaten to search the residence, may I ask if the young master has turned his back against the responsibilities of a master teacher or sullied the name of the Master Teacher Pavilion? Besides, even if a search must occur, it should be conducted by the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion instead. What rights do you have to do so? Do you have a search warrant with you?"

As a qualified butler, Sun Qiang had studied the various convention and laws

governing master teachers so as to act with propriety.

Given the young master's esteemed standing as a 4-star master teacher, no one had the rights to search with residence without a search warrant from the Master Teacher Pavilion.

"We might not have any search warrant, but given that so many senior master teachers are before him, don't you think it is a huge breach of etiquette for him to not pay his respects?"

"Indeed, get him out to greet us! Does he intend to breach the master teacher moral code?"

Two middle-aged man of the group threatened.

They had made the journey here to ask about Kong shi's handwritten letter. If that fellow were to remain hidden, they wouldn't be able to do anything at all.

"Pay respects?"

Hearing the other party's arrogant words, Sun Qiang's face immediately flushed in anger. "Audacious!"

"What?"

Zhao Feiwu and Garden Owner Xue's body suddenly swayed weakly.

The one who is acting audaciously... seems to be you instead!

The visiting group included sect leaders and nation elders of the fourteen strongest empires in the region. They were all either powerful experts or half 5-star master teachers... And yet, an insignificant Transcendent Mortal 1-dan cultivator like you actually dared to shout to them? Where did your guts come from?

"The young master is the esteemed direct disciple of great Master Teacher Yang Xuan! How dare you bunch of goons who haven't even reached 5-star yet cause a ruckus here?"

Sun Qiang waved his hands arrogantly. "What are you all waiting for? Scram!"

Old Master Yang Xuan was a master teacher with a ranking of at least 6-star. As his butler, he had to carry himself with pride and disposition which wouldn't bring shame to his name.

How dare this bunch of goons demand for the young master to pay respects to them? Who gave you such guts?

"..."

Sect Leader Luo Huang and the others stared at one another, dumbstruck.

They thought that their identity would surely scare Zhang Xuan out of his wits, and the latter would immediately give up and rush out. But never in their dreams did they expect to be blocked at the door by his butler... Not to mention, the other party even said that they were being audacious and chased them away...

The heck! Am I hearing things?

"What did you say? I dare you to repeat yourself!"

Sect Leader Luo Huang's eyebrows shot up as a powerful aura burst forth from him.

He was the sect leader of the Fleeting Cloud Sect, a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle expert. To be chased away by this insignificant fellow, how could he possibly take it lying?

"What did I say? Are you deaf? How can someone as dumb as you remain as a master teacher... I truly wonder how you became a sect leader like this!"

Sun Qiang waved his hands and said, "Fine, since you didn't hear me clearly the first time, I'll repeat myself for your sake... I am asking you to scram, don't cause any trouble here!"

"You're courting death!"

Seeing that his teacher had been humiliated, Luo Xuan couldn't hold back his rage any longer and charged forward.

Hong long!

A gigantic palm carrying an indescribably violent aura came charging toward Sun Qiang, eradicating everything in its path.

Qiu!

But before the palm could strike Sun Qiang, a sharp call echoed from the skies. Following which, a gigantic shadow fell straight down to the ground.

Due to the incredible speed from its movements, a shrill sonic boom threatened to pierce everyone's ears.

"The heck..."

Luo Xuan barely managed to release a shout of exclamation before he was seated upon.

His entire body was immediately bent in an unnatural anger, and a mouthful of fresh blood spewed from his mouth. He nearly breathed his last at that moment.

Demon Cinque Beast!

Back when Zhang Xuan left, he had entrusted the safety of everyone in the residence to him. Thus, upon seeing Luo Xuan make a move against Sun Qiang, it immediately swooped down to protect the latter.

As a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert who was on the verge of achieving a breakthrough at any moment, the Demon Cinque Beast was significantly stronger than Luo Xuan. Not to mention, it possessed astounding speed and nearly invincible defensive capability. The latter didn't even have a chance to react before he was mortally wounded.

Luo Xuan felt as though he was on the verge of breaking down.

He was the genius who was the strongest contender for the champion seat for the Master Teacher Tournament, an expert who was just a step away from reaching Consonant Spirit realm, and yet, he nearly died from being squashed by a spirit beast... Just the thought of it left him incredibly frenzied.

"Beast, how dare you!"

A crimson glow extended across Sect Leader Luo Huang's face all the way down to the neck as he bellowed furiously.

He was the sect leader of the Fleeting Cloud Sect, the strongest power among the 28 kingdoms in the region... And yet, his student actually ended up being squashed by a spirit beast right before him. Infuriated, he prepared to charge up to teach the other party a lesson.

"Why? Is a half 5-star master teacher like you going to lay his hands on an ordinary civilian? What wrong have I committed? What wrong has Zhang shi committed?"

Sun Qiang stepped forward.

In view of their standing, master teachers wouldn't make a move on ordinary civilians as long as they didn't sin. Sun Qiang was only preventing anyone from trespassing into their residence, so he couldn't be said to have sinned. Rather, Luo Xuan, who lost his composure and charged at him, was clearly at fault here. If Luo Huang were to make a move instead, the only one who would be embarrassed would be him.

But even though Sun Qiang was confident that the other party wouldn't stoop down to his level, he was still feeling a little worried.

"You..."

Having his intentions questioned, Sect Leader Luo Huang retracted his outstretched palm.

The other party was just a subordinate. To kill the other party over such a small matter would only make him seem petty.

"I'll repeat it once more. The young master isn't in the residence now. No matter what you're here for, be it to acknowledge him as your teacher or to seek his guidance, I'll have to ask of you to leave!"

Seeing that the other party didn't make a move in the end, Sun Qiang harrumphed while heaving a sigh of relief on the inside.

"Acknowledging him as our teacher?"

Hearing those words, everyone felt faint-headed.

Acknowledge your head!

Have you seen anyone coming to acknowledge a teacher in such a manner?

Besides, that Zhang Xuan is only a 4-star primary master teacher. What right does he have to become the teacher of us half 5-star master teachers?

Seeing the awkward situation, an elder walked over and asked, "Sect Leader Luo, what do we do now?"

They were all esteemed experts. They couldn't possibly just come over to overturn everything in the other party's house, going to the extent of even laying their hands on the other party's subordinate!

If they were to do so, even if the headquarters didn't pursue this matter, they would probably die of shame.

But... If they didn't do so, how could they ascertain whether Zhang Shi was around or not?

"Let's return for now!"

With a darkened face, Sect Leader Luo Huang waved his hands.

"Return?"

Everyone was taken aback.

Are we supposed to retreat just like that?

Chased away by the other party's subordinate, aren't we a little too useless?

"What else can we do?" Sect Leader Luo Huang harrumphed.

He was also getting a huge headache over this matter.

But from the looks of it, Zhang Xuan really didn't seem to be around. Otherwise, given the huge commotion that had occurred, it was impossible for him to still remain hidden.

Quarreling with another person's subordinate while the person isn't around... He couldn't afford to lose his reputation over this!

More importantly, this butler had way too much bravado. Anyone else would have surely trembled in fear before their presence, but this fellow... didn't think much of them at all...

I wonder if this fellow really has some kind of backing or he's simply that brave!

Sect Leader Luo Huang feared that if he were to continue fighting with the other party, he would die of anger first.

After a moment of hesitation, Sect Leader Luo Huang ordered, "We'll send someone to keep a lookout at this residence. As soon as Zhang Xuan returns, they'll report back to us, and it won't be too late for us to capture him then!"

Instead of embarrassing himself here, he might as well leave for the moment first.

Chapter 562

Returning to Myriad Kingdom City

"Yes!"

Even though everyone was reluctant, there was no better solution at hand.

If they were to really blow things up and the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion got involved, the headquarters might be alarmed, and their envoy might arrive even before Zhang Xuan returned. If so, they would be put in a difficult position.

Huala!

Thus, as swiftly as they came, they retreated. And after seeing all of them leave, Sun Qiang's legs caved in and he fell to the ground.

He was the butler of Master Teacher Yang Xuan, and he knew he couldn't lose out to others in terms of disposition, but... his cultivation was simply too low at the moment. With a strength of only Transcendent Mortal 1-dan, it had taken all of his courage to stand before so many experts.

Recalling how close he came to danger just a moment ago, Zhao Feiwu stepped forward and asked, "Don't you... fear death?"

To yell at so many Consonant Spirit realm experts to scram, even her father wouldn't be able to muster such courage. Where did the confidence of this plump butler come from?

After a moment later, Sun Qiang finally recovered. Standing up, he shook his head in response.

"Of course I do!"

"But if you're scared, why would you still..."

Even Garden Owner Xue was perplexed by the other party's actions.

Since he felt fear, why did he still do it?

If Sect Leader Luo Huang were to really make a move then, he would have surely died on the spot.

If that were to happen, nothing could remedy it. It would mean nothing even if Zhang shi were to redress your grievances in the future!

A dead life couldn't be brought back!

"I am indebted to the old master. From a humble Zhenqi realm cultivator, he had brought me to a position where I'm respected and trusted by so many... As long as he allows me to remain at his side as his butler, I have the obligation to ensure that the old master's dignity isn't being trampled on... even if it means my death!" Sun Qiang said with determination.

If not for the old master, he would probably spend his entire life in the small shop he had in Tianxuan Royal City. He would have never met so many master teachers, needless to say, step into a position where no one dares to belittle him.

The old master had given him a second life. If he, as a butler, was unable to uphold the old master's dignity, he would have failed in his duties.

This was the faith he held, and he was determined to live his life by it.

This was precisely the reason why he mustered his courage and stood before those experts despite the danger.

His strength might be lacking, and his cultivation might be low, but... the dignity of a high-ranked master teacher mustn't be thrown away!

"This..."

Zhao Feiwu was in awe.

This plump man may look like an unreliable figure, but yet, he had things which he was unwilling to compromise on as well.

It seemed that even though the people that gathered around Zhang shi were all eccentric, they seemed to be oddly and unreservedly united. Conflict and politics

didn't seem to exist among them.

Perhaps... this might be due to his charisma.

A moment later, Zhao Feiwu suddenly thought of something and asked, "The old master that you spoke of refers to Yang shi? Where is Yang shi at the moment?"

She had heard of Yang shi-Zhang shi's teacher-but she had never met him before.

"The old master likes to spend his time roaming freely across the lands. I've no idea where he is either!"

As soon as he spoke of Yang Xuan, Sun Qiang's face immediately lit up in admiration.

"You don't know where he is?" Zhao Feiwu was perplexed. "Then... Is he not going to spectate the Master Teacher Tournament?"

His student was participating in such an important tournament for the first time, was Yang shi, despite being the other party's teacher, not going to support Zhang shi at such a crucial moment?

Sun Qiang contemplated for a moment before replying, "This... I'm not too sure as well. However... I think he should be coming soon!"

It was clear that those who had come together harbored malicious intentions toward Zhang shi. If the old master didn't appear soon, something bad might really happen.

But... Old Master, where are you?

...

Ah choo!

Zhang Xuan rubbed his nose.

Naturally, he wasn't aware that Ding Hong was already at Myriad Kingdom City and had already convinced the fourteen strongest powers currently in the city to move against him. He was still on the back of the aerial spirit beast, glancing down at the winding mountain range below as his eyes slowly lit up in excitement.

After half a month's journey, he was finally returning to Myriad Kingdom City!

"I'm finally back. Judging by the timing, the Soulrouse Grass should have matured already. I should be able to craft the Soulrouse Incense and wake Lu Chong now!"

As the Soulrouse Grass could not be kept in his storage ring, Zhang Xuan chose not to bring it with him. It had been fifty days since his departure, and it should have already matured under Wang Ying's care and be ready to be crafted into the Soulrouse Incense.

With this, Lu Chong would be able to come back to life, and he would have resolved a boulder weighing down on his heart.

Honglong!

A distance away, a disturbance in the surrounding spiritual energy could be felt, and a powerful aura suddenly burst out.

"I've achieved a breakthrough?"

Ruohuan gongzi slowly opened his eyes.

At this moment, his eyes were clear, and his body was seemingly filled with endlessly vitality and might.

Transcendent Mortal 4-dan Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle!

Under Zhang Xuan's pointers and the nourishment of a middle-tier spirit stone, he had really managed to reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle within half a month.

"Zhang shi, thank you for your guidance!"

Sensing overwhelming energy far superior to before flowing through his body, Ruohuan gongzi clasped his fist in gratitude.

If not for the other party, who knew how long it would have taken him to reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony!"

Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

The surge of Heaven's Path zhenqi he infused into the other party previously had made the other party's originally turbid zhenqi purer. Building on such a foundation, it wasn't too hard for the other party to advance several small realms consecutively within a short period of time.

If the other party couldn't do as much under such conditions, the other party would truly be unworthy of his title as a 'genius'.

"Zhang shi, your cultivation..." Pavilion Master Kang raised his doubts.

Seeing Ruohuan gongzi's swift improvement in the past few days had delighted him, but at the same time, doubts started sprouting in his mind.

If Zhang shi could induce such massive improvements in others, why couldn't he do the same for himself?

Given that the other party hadn't even reached Transcendent Mortal 3-dan yet, he would surely in a huge disadvantage competing in the Master Teacher Tournament.

"Don't worry. I'll try my best to advance to the Yin-Yang realm pinnacle before the tournament, and if possible, perhaps even Clarifying Turbidity realm!"

Knowing what the other party was worried about, Zhang Xuan waved his hands nonchalantly.

To advance his cultivation, he needed middle-tier spirit stones-to do so through absorbing spiritual energy in the air was simply too inefficient. However, this just happened to be the resource he was sorely lacking at the moment.

Since any advancement otherwise would be insignificant in comparison, he decided to find some way to procure more middle-tier spirit stones in the capital first before raising his cultivation.

"Un!"

Hearing Zhang shi's guarantee, Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head. "We're about to arrive at your residence..."

Walking up to the entrance of the room on top of the spirit beast, Zhang Xuan suddenly turned around and said, "Un. I'll be bidding you farewell here then. I'll be busy during

this period of time so don't look for me. Rest assured, I'll surely appear at the Master Teacher Tournament when the time comes!"

To procure more middle-tier spirit stones, it was likely that he would have to appear in public as Yang shi. If Pavilion Master Kang were to visit during this period of time, given the abrupt disappearance of Zhang shi and the latter's familiarity with him, there was a chance that the latter might tie the two together and realize that Yang shi was actually Zhang shi. Thus, Zhang Xuan decided to take precautions against that.

"Alright!"

Thinking that Zhang Xuan might be intending on going into seclusion, Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head.

After saying all that had to be said, Zhang Xuan leaped off the back of the spirit beast, and not too long later, Pavilion Master Kang departed along with the spirit beast.

As soon as Zhang Xuan returned to the residence, Sun Qiang suddenly rushed up to him.

"Young master!"

Noticing that something was amiss from Sun Qiang's anxious expression, Zhang Xuan asked, "Did something happen while I was away?"

"The Fleeting Cloud Sect and thirteen other powers came to find you while you were away..."

Sun Qiang swiftly recounted the entire matter.

"Why are they looking for me?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had never seen those people before. Why would they suddenly pay him a visit?

"Inform me the next time they come over..."

Zhang Xuan had been in a dilemma as to who he should procure spirit stones from when these people came knocking at his door. This worked out fine as well. At the very least, he didn't have to go out there to search for customers.

"Yes!" Seeing the composure on the young master's face, Sun Qiang suddenly felt the burden on his shoulder being lifted, and he heaved a sigh of relief. "Young master, may I know where the old master is at the moment, and will he be coming over?"

"Teacher?"

Zhang Xuan was stunned for a moment. However, he quickly recovered and replied, "Teacher told me that he will be coming over in the next few days... Alright, I have to speak with Wang Ying. Where is she?"

Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

Since he was going to appear as Yang shi, it was best for him to let the news out in advance so that it wouldn't be too abrupt and unnatural.

"She's currently in the midst of caring for the Soulrise Grass. Young master... are you intending to cure Young Master Lu Chong now?" Upon recalling something, Sun Qiang's eyes suddenly lit up.

As the butler of the residence, how could he be unaware of what Wang Ying was up? For the young master to look for her so anxiously as soon as he returned, most likely, this was something that had to do with Lu Chong.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head. "Lu Chong's issue is intricately tied with the topic of souls, and I would require absolute silence for the treatment. Make sure that no one interrupts me!"

Sun Qiang nodded. However, a moment later, he finally realized the reason behind the incongruity he had been feeling since the young master's arrival and asked, "Young master, didn't Zhao Ya xiaojie leave with you? Why isn't she here?"

Since Zhao Ya left along with Zhang Xuan, it didn't make sense for the latter to return alone.

"She has gone somewhere else; she won't be returning for the time being..."

Zhang Xuan shook his hands before walking over to the room where the Soulrise Grass was being cultivated.

"Teacher!"

As soon as Zhang Xuan entered the room, he immediately saw Wang Ying.

Nodding his head to acknowledge the other party's greeting, he turned his gaze to the Soulrouse Grass placed in the middle of the room.

By now, it was already around half the height of a human, and it emitted a unique scent that left with one feeling confusion. It seemed as though one's soul would be trapped in it the moment one put one's guard down.

Harnessing soul energy, the Soulrouse Grass possessed the ability to interfere with one's psyche.

"You've worked hard over the past few days. You should take a rest!"

Seeing how well the Soulrouse Grass grown, not to mention, the complete lack of scratches on it, one could easily imagine how much effort Wang Ying had put into its cultivation.

"Un!"

Having been complimented, Wang Ying's face reddened, and she hurriedly walked out.

"Time to start!"

Drawing his soul out from his body, Zhang Xuan grabbed the Soulrouse Grass lightly in his palm and began to infuse his zhenqi in to forge it.

He would have required a lot of preparation beforehand to forge the Soulrouse Grass successfully before, but after his soul had been tempered by both yin and yang energy, thus becoming even stronger and compact, forging it wasn't a problem for him anymore.

Under the inflow of zhenqi from Zhang Xuan, the medicinal herb melted, turning into a puddle of flowing green liquid.

And with a flick of his fingers, the liquid began gathering together, forming an incense stick.

Soulrouse Incense!

It possessed the ability to awaken a dormant soul after being lit.

"Based on what Mo Hunsheng said, to increase the chances of waking Lu Chong, it'll be best for me to infuse a portion of my soul into it!"

By infusing a portion of his soul into the Soulruse Grass before lighting it, its effectiveness could be enhanced.

"Soul split!"

Zhang Xuan carefully split a portion of his soul, and in the process, his face gradually paled.

Even though his soul had reached the cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle, dividing his soul would still cause significant damage to him.

But as long as Lu Chong could be safe, there was no sacrifice too great.

Fusing the divided portion of his soul with the incense, he was finally ready to awaken Lu Chong.

"Great! I should begin now..."

Having completed all preparations, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Retracting his soul back into his body, he walked forward toward Lu Chong.

Chapter 563

Attack [2in1]

Zhang Xuan placed the Soulrouse Incense on the Soul Aperture on Lu Chong's glabella and lit it.

Smoke slowly rose from the Soulrouse Incense, and along with it came a distant and vague song reminiscent of the melody of gods and demons, leaving one intoxicated. If one were to stare intently at the smoke, one would be able to see a faint silhouette dressed in loose robe dancing a unique dance which seemed to hold a certain allure for a soul.

"Return, soul! Why roam in distant lands when your belonging lies here? Abandoning for paradise for sufferings in a foreign land. Return, soul! There is nowhere else you can rest! Giants of astounding stature seek to reap you. In the lands they bring you ten suns sear, metal flows in rivers and stones exist in mere dust..."

The voice slowly seeped into Lu Chong's glabella, resonating with his sleeping soul.

"Whether he will awake or not will count on this!"

As the distant voice grew louder and louder, Zhang Xuan took in a deep breath and drew his soul out as well. After which, his soul dashed straight into Lu Chong's consciousness.

And the next moment, an ocean stretching to the horizons appeared before his eyes.

"How can his inner world be so large?"

Standing in the midst of the other party's consciousness, Zhang Xuan was stunned.

Even with his soul cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle, Zhang Xuan found himself unable to perceive the ends to the other party's inner world.

The inner world of an ordinary cultivator was usually only the size of a pond-Lu Chong's case was indeed extraordinary.

"Where is Lu Chong's soul?"

Quickly recovering from his astonishment, Zhang Xuan remembered his purpose here and hurriedly scanned the surroundings.

A dormant soul would usually be lying asleep in a corner of one's inner world. With the assistance from the Soulrouse Incense, it shouldn't be difficult to wake the soul up.

Flying around the vast inner world, Zhang Xuan soon found a gigantic figure lying amidst dense mist.

Despite lying horizontally in the ocean, it was still as tall as a mountain. The eyes of the figure were tightly shut.

"This... Isn't this a little... way too big?"

Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in disbelief.

Not only was Lu Chong's inner world huge, even his soul was humongous as well. In fact, it seemed to wield even greater strength than Zhang Xuan's Transcendent Mortal 4-dan soul... But how could that be possible?

One must know that Lu Chong was only at Zongshi realm when he went into a coma. How could a Zongshi realm cultivator possess such a powerful soul?

"Could this be... Acquired Soul Physique?"

Suddenly, a thought flashed across Zhang Xuan's mind.

There were physical constitutions in the world which, when awoken, could induce a rapid rise in one's cultivation. Similarly, there were also physical constitutions that could enhance one's soul as well... and one of them was the Acquired Soul Physique.

Just as stated in the name, this constitution didn't come with one at birth. Thus, even master teachers would be unable to perceiving one's plausible aptitude in this aspect before its appearance. Usually, such unique constitutions usually appeared after the host underwent a major event in his life.

It was similar to how some people gained the ability to see ghosts after falling off the stairs, or how some recalled their past lives after suffering an injury to the head and

began to chant ancient Sanskrit sutras.

If Zhang Xuan wasn't mistaken, Lu Chong belonged to this category as well.

He was originally just an ordinary person, but the massacre of his clan had diverted the course of his life. After which, he met Zhang Xuan, and to save the latter, he sacrificed himself and fell into a coma...

These experiences had caused a qualitative evolvement of his soul.

"If my conjecture is true, given the size of his soul, when he finally wakes up, his cultivation will probably be stronger than mine..."

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

He thought that it would take a long time before Lu Chong fully recovered from the impact of that incident, but to his delight, this incident actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

But still, if Zhang Xuan didn't possess an in-depth knowledge of souls, this unique constitution would probably have gone to waste... But now, as long as the latter wakes up and is imparted the Heaven's Path Soul Art, his cultivation would surely soar.

Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan walked up to the gigantic body and shouted, "Lu Chong, I am Zhang shi. Wake up!"

...

While Zhang Xuan was attempting to wake Lu Chong, Sect Leader Luo Huang and the others received news of Zhang Xuan's return.

"Since he's back, it's about time for us to pay him a visit and ask of the matter!"

"Indeed. Given how he is barely qualified as a 4-star master teacher, how can he be qualified to hold onto Kong shi's handwritten letter?"

"If he hands it over obediently, we can still choose to let the matter go. But if he decides to make things difficult for himself... we'll conduct a trial on the spot to investigate the origin of the letter! If it is proven that he has breached the master teacher moral code by stealing the possession of an innocent party, he shall be punished!"

...

Voices rang up in agreement.

Kong shi's handwritten letter was an unparalleled treasure for all master teachers. As leaders of their respective powers, no matter how kind-hearted they could have been before, for the welfare of the masses behind them who were relying on them for support, they had no choice but to harden their hearts.

If sacrificing one Zhang Xuan could lead to the rise of their power, then this was a gamble that was worth taking on.

Sect Leader Luo Huang interjected the commotion and asked, "Everyone, calm down for a moment. Don't you think it is weird how the butler was able to stand before us without the slightest fear, treating us disdainfully even?"

"This..." Everyone suddenly stopped to think about the matter.

Despite their huge line-up, they still ended up being chased away by an insignificant butler. Just by recalling the incident left their hearts boiling in anger. But still, there was indeed something doubtful about the matter. Was that butler truly fearless of death, or did he have some kind of backing to fall back on?

"If I'm not mistaken, that fellow's backing must be the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion!"

"He probably still doesn't know that the matter regarding Kong shi's handwritten letter has been leaked. Otherwise, he definitely wouldn't dare to do so!"

"I think that it might be the Demon Cinque Beast. That spirit beast is indeed powerful. Even a Consonant Spirit realm primary stage expert might have a tough time fighting with it!"

"With such a powerful tamed beast and his young master's standing in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, he would be unworthy as a master teacher's butler if he didn't have that much pride in himself."

The group in the room discussed.

Even though the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion wasn't as powerful

as them, they still didn't dare to go overboard. After all, the Master Teacher Pavilion was strict in enforcing its rules, and they could get into trouble if the headquarter were to learn of the matter.

That butler was probably able to keep his bravado having guessed as much.

Hearing the responses from the crowd, Sect Leader Luo Huang shook his head.

"Seems like everyone doesn't know much about that Zhang Xuan. To tell you all the truth, I've had my subordinates look into his affairs for the past few days!"

As the most powerful individuals in the region, they honestly didn't think much of Zhang Xuan. Rather, they were more guarded toward those of their own group, such as the Fleeting Cloud Sect, Cascading Sand Sect, and Frigid Gale Sect, fearing that they might backstab them. Thus, the information they had on Zhang Xuan was severely limited.

After all, who would have the effort to worry about a mere ant when there were other threats looming in the area?

They had never entertained the possibility that this rising star of Myriad Kingdom Alliance might not be as simple as he looked on the surface.

"Oh?"

Seeing Sect Leader Luo Huang's grim expression, everyone turned their gazes toward him.

"It's said that this Zhang Xuan isn't even twenty this year, and it was only two months ago that he had passed his 2-star master teacher examination. His improvement is, in the truest sense, frightening..."

Sect Leader Luo Huang spoke slowly. "But of course, we can't exclude the possibility that he had been hiding his true strength from the start to create such fanfare..."

There were also quite a few master teachers who trained to a certain level before breezing through multiple examinations at once.

As such, a 2-star master teacher rising straight to the level of a 4-star wasn't too shocking.

"However, what is worrying is that... despite his young age, he has already attained the strength of a 4-star master teacher. In fact, in the selection round, he even triumphed over Pavilion Master Kang's direct disciple, Jun Ruohuan... Aren't you all curious about his teacher?"

Sect Leader Luo Huang finally revealed his worry.

"This..."

Everyone fell into deep thought.

They didn't think much of Zhang Xuan before-after all, how could a mere 4-star primary master teacher stand against them all?

A 4-star primary master teacher might be a prestigious figure in Myriad Kingdom City, but to huge sects and influential powers like them, it meant nothing at all.

However, after hearing Sect Leader Luo Huang's words, they realized that they had been negligent.

The Myriad Kingdom Alliance had been lagging behind in terms of resources as compared to the other kingdoms. It had no half 5-star master teacher or Consonant Spirit realm experts... and thus, it had no long-range Tutelage Jade Tokens as well. As such, cultivating a single 4-star master teacher was difficult on its own.

Under such conditions, raising a 4-star master teacher who wasn't even in his twenties yet was indeed an extraordinary feat.

"Based on the news I received, Zhang Xuan's teacher is a half 5-star master teacher known as Yang Xuan."

Sect Leader Luo Huang revealed the intelligence that he had gathered.

According to the intelligence, Yang Xuan rarely appeared in public, and on the occasions he did, it was in lower tiered kingdoms. However, due to the weak eye of discernment of those living in those regions, they were unable to perceive the other party's cultivation clearly, thus resulting in a lack of concrete evaluation of Yang Xuan's strength.

But based on the other party's feats, Sect Leader Luo Huang determined the latter to

be a 3-star to 4-star master teacher. However, it was clear that a 4-star master teacher couldn't possibly raise a student as talented as Zhang Xuan...

What that allowed him to make his final evaluation was... Su shi and Ling shi visiting him and leaving respectfully.

To be worthy of being treated with such respect by a 4-star master teacher, it was highly likely that the other party was a half 5-star master teacher like them.

After all, if the other party was any stronger, he would have surely gone to higher tiered empires already instead of staying in an insignificant place like the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. Besides, if a master teacher of that caliber were to visit a lower tiered kingdom, the regional Master Teacher Pavilion would surely be informed to make preparations to welcome him. It was impossible for there to be no news on the matter at all.

More importantly... Those who had come into contact with Yang Xuan didn't seem to note that the latter was capable of 'Spirit Gathering Diction'!

This was a fundamental ability to a 5-star master teacher. Those who hadn't grasped this ability couldn't qualify as a 5-star master teacher.

"Half 5-star master teacher? Since the other party is of equal standing as us, what do we have to fear?"

"Indeed! So what if he's a half 5-star master teacher? Kong shi's handwritten letter is of vital importance to all master teachers... Even if he's a full-fledged 5-star master teacher, I say that we should still confront him for it!"

"Despite being a master teacher, he kept Kong shi's handwritten letter for himself instead of submitting it up to the headquarters. Even if he's a 5-star master teacher, he will surely be severely punished for his misdeed!"

...

After hearing that the Zhang Xuan's teacher possessed strength of their tier, the crowd heaved a sigh of relief.

An elder asked, "Sect Leader Luo Huang, what's your view on this matter?"

"Based on my intelligence, that Yang Xuan doesn't seem to be in Myriad Kingdom City at the moment. However... to avoid unnecessary trouble, I think that we should unite as one for the moment, obtain the handwritten letter as soon as possible, and decide on its allocation later on. Otherwise... it is likely that none of us will obtain the relic," Sect Leader Luo Huang said grimly.

Whether it would be boiled or fried, they would have to take down their prey first.

It was too early to be talking about the allocation when their prey hasn't been caught yet.

To date, it was still unconfirmed whether Kong shi's handwritten letter was truly with Zhang Xuan, and, if it was, whether it was authentic or not.

If they were to delay the matter and Yang Xuan were to arrive in the city, even though they had no fear for the other party, it would still be unwise for them to go overboard—after all, the other party was a fellow half 5-star master teacher as well.

"Sect Leader Luo, rest assured. We are all mature adults, we know what we should do!"

"A treasure such as Kong shi's handwritten letter can't possibly belong to a single power. At the very least, we know this much!"

"Let's talk about it after obtaining it from Zhang shi's hands!"

The crowd nodded their heads, indicating their approval toward this course of action.

"Since everyone is agreeable to it, I'll start delegating the roles then!" Seeing that he had everyone onboard, Sect Leader Luo Huang nodded his head in satisfaction. "When we're there, I hope that Sect Leader Hu and Sect Leader Bai can curb that Demon Cinque Beast!"

"The rest shall move with me to capture that Zhang Xuan and secure Kong shi's handwritten letter. We'll have to move fast, or else it'll be troublesome if he hides the object!"

"Alright!"

Everyone nodded in consent.

Since they have decided to make a move, naturally, they should do it as soon as possible. Who knew what kinds of hiccups could occur if they were to delay the matter?

"Let's set off then!"

After confirming the details of the plan, Sect Leader Luo Huang waved his hand, and the group marched off toward Zhang Xuan's residence.

...

Sun Qiang stood in an empty residence with a deep frown etched on his forehead.

The young master didn't think much of the group that came knocking a few days ago, but Sun Qiang still couldn't help but worry about it.

It was clear that the other party bore malicious intentions. He was able to chase them away by insisting that the young master wasn't around the previous time, but now that the young master had returned, it wouldn't be easy for him to stop them the next time.

Garden Owner Xue walked up to Sun Qiang and asked, "Where's Zhang shi?"

Zhang shi had saved her herb garden from a huge calamity the previous time. Knowing that the group of people who came the other day would surely come knocking again to cause trouble, she volunteered to stay behind.

"The young master is in the midst of treating Young Master Lu Chong, so you'll have to wait for a while longer!" Sun Qiang replied.

"Alright!" Garden Owner Xue replied. Then, with a slightly worried expression, she remarked, "Now that Zhang shi is back, I fear that the group of men would return once more to look for him!"

"Indeed..." Sun Qiang sighed. "If only the old master were around... There would be no need to fear those creeps!"

"Yang shi... If it isn't a sensitive question, may I ask what rank is he as a master teacher?"

Seeing the immense confidence Sun Qiang had in his old master, Garden Owner Xue couldn't help but ask about it.

"I've no idea as well, but... it seems as though there's no problem he can't solve. Based on Su shi and Ling shi's previous evaluation... it seems like he is at least a 6-star master teacher!" Sun Qiang replied.

"At least a 6-star master teacher?"

Garden Owner Xue narrowed her eyes.

One had to possess a minimum cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 9-dan to become a 6-star master teacher.

To be at least a 6-star master teacher, doesn't that mean that the other party had already reached such a level?

"That's right. I've been with the old master for some time now, but I haven't met a single problem that could stumble him yet. If the old master is willing to help you, the issue with your soul can surely be easily solved!" Sun Qiang said confidently.

He had witnessed the old master's prowess, and there was no problem too great for him.

In the past few days that Garden Owner Xue had been here, he had learned of her damaged soul, so he couldn't help but say that.

"He can heal my soul?"

Garden Owner Xue's face reddened, and her breathing hastened.

Her soul had been injured for some time now, and to cure it, she even went to the extent of consuming the spirit contained within medicinal herbs to make up for her deficiency... But it ended up being futile in the end. If Yang shi was truly able to solve her problem, she would be willing to do anything in exchange.

Anything.

"Un. However, I would advise you not to bear too much hope for it. Given the old master's standing, he wouldn't help anyone easily!" Sun Qiang shook his head.

With a bitter smile, Garden Owner Xue shook her head.

"You're right..."

If Yang shi was truly a 6-star master, it would surely be an exorbitant price to pay to engage his help.

And she knew that she had no treasures that could possibly hold any allure to an expert of that caliber.

"There's no need to think so much into it for now. After all, we don't know where the old master is currently. If he's in the city, I can plead for you on his behalf. Despite the old master's incredible capability, he's an amiable person," Sun Qiang remarked. But halfway through his words, a powerful aura suddenly surged straight at him, shrouding the entire residence.

"Zhang shi, Fleeting Cloud Sect's Luo Huang, White Helios Sect's Bai Kaizhi, Cascading Sand Sect's Huang Qi... fourteen sect leaders and nation elders have come to visit you. Come out and pay your respects!"

Hong long!

And in the middle of those words, more than a dozen figure suddenly appeared in the courtyard. Every single one of them possessed immense might, and their presence felt like an unmovable mountain.

Sect Leader Luo Huang and the others... had arrived!

Hualala!

Hearing the voice, Zheng Yang, Wang Ying, and the others immediately rushed out of their rooms and stared at the group warily.

Gritting his teeth, Sun Qiang stepped forward and replied, "The young master is currently in seclusion, so it isn't convenient for him to meet you. You should come back another day!"

A middle-aged man stepped forward and harrumphed coldly.

"In seclusion? Hahaha, more like he is too guilty to meet us after breaching the master

teacher moral code!"

The overwhelming pressure in the air instantaneously heightened. Sun Qiang felt as though a mountain was slowly making its way toward him. Given his strength, no matter how much effort he put in, it was impossible for him to stop its path.

Consonant Spirit realm expert!

At this level of cultivation, one could exert pressure directly on an opponent's soul. Even Pavilion Master Kang wouldn't stand a chance against the middle-aged man.

Seeing the other party attempting to pin blame on Zhang Xuan, Garden Owner Xue frowned and stepped forward.

"Zhang shi is an upright and compassionate man. How could he possibly breach the master teacher moral code? I'll have to ask you to not utter falsehood!"

Frowning, the middle-aged man thrust his palm forward.

"Who do you think you are? Do you think that you are qualified to be speaking here?"

"This is bad!"

Not expecting the other party to be much more forceful than before, resorting to violence without any hesitation, Garden Owner Xue narrowed her eyes and threw out a fist to meet the other party's attack.

Hong!

The palm collided with the fist, but in the next instant, an immense force traveled through Garden Owner Xue's fist and struck her chest.

Pu!

Spewing a mouthful of blood, she was sent a dozen meters back.

She could already be considered as one of the strongest experts in Myriad Kingdom City, but despite that, she was still unable to withstand a single blow from the other party.

A Clarifying Turbidity realm cultivator couldn't possibly hope to match up to a Consonant Spirit realm expert.

Roar!

The Demon Cinque Beast responsible for protecting the courtyard yelled and leaped down.

"You beast, who do you think you are baring your fangs at?"

Sect Leader Bai harrumphed coldly, and along with the middle-aged man from before, he stepped forward and placed his palm on the ground.

Huala!

A zhenqi net fell from the sky, locking the Demon Cinque Beast in place.

Roar!

Trapped in the net, the Demon Cinque Beast struggled vigorously, only to find its efforts futile.

It was as if this zhenqi net was made of the hardest material in the world. Despite its violent thrashing, the net didn't even budge the slightest bit.

The Demon Cinque beast was an invincible existence in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, but its strength was still lacking compared to these sect leaders, not to mention, both of them had moved in unison to subdue it.

"What are you doing?"

Seeing the group injuring Garden Owner Xue and sealing the Demon Cinque Beast in place in just a few seconds, Sun Qiang's face warped in astonishment. In that instant, he felt as though his heart was falling through an abyss. His worst premonition had come to be.

Chapter 564

Descending From the Heavens

The other party was at least slightly fearful of him the previous time, retreating at his bellowing. But from the looks of it, the other party seemed intent to accomplish whatever they intended to do this time around.

What in the world had happened for this group to even disregard the young master's identity as a 4-star master teacher?

"What are we doing? Stop playing the fool!"

Sect Leader Luo Huang sneered coldly. "Where's Zhang shi? Get him to come out at this very instant, or else don't blame us for getting nasty!"

Sect Leader Bai's eyebrows shot up in disdain.

"The Master Teacher Pavilion does indeed have its rules. We might be unable to lay our hands on a person of Zhang shi's standing, but if it was just a mere butler and a few other students... Do you think that the headquarters would punish us for crippling insignificant ants?"

Master teachers were governed by strict rules, but this didn't mean that they were saints. Just the bloodshed in the wars against the soul oracles and the Otherworldly Demons could easily fill an ocean.

It was true that the Master Teacher Pavilion frowned on senseless murder, but as long as one didn't go overboard in one's actions, the headquarters would usually just overlook such actions.

If these people refused to cooperate, they were willing to cripple or even kill them. The worst that could happen to them from this was just a dip in their reputation.

"The young master is in the midst of his seclusion, and he mustn't be interrupted at the moment. If you wish to meet him... please return tomorrow!"

Despite knowing that what the other party said was the truth, Sun Qiang knew that he couldn't back down at this point.

The young master had entrusted him to keep anyone from interrupting him. Unless he dies, he would never allow anyone to barge in at this point!

"Since you're seeking death, don't blame us for getting nasty!"

Not expecting this fellow to continue standing his ground, Sect Leader Bai flicked his finger.

Peng!

A sword qi flew through the air, and before Sun Qiang could react, he was already struck in his chest, and fresh blood spurted from his mouth.

How could he possibly stand against an opponent whom even the Demon Cinque Beast and Garden Owner Xue were no match for? If not for the other party's reluctant to sacrifice his reputation by killing a mere underling, he would have already been killed by now.

"Damn it!"

Upon seeing the sight, the eyes of Zheng Yang and the others reddened in anger. Roaring furiously, they charged forward.

But given that they haven't even reached Half-Transcension yet, how could they possibly be a match for a group of Consonant Spirit realm experts? With just a few flicks of Sect Leader Bai's finger, they were all already lying on the ground, injured.

They had devoted all of their strength, and yet, they couldn't inflict the slightest injury to their enemies. They couldn't help but feel frustrated at their helplessness.

All along, under the protection of their teacher, they had been able to cultivate peacefully without any worries. But at this moment, they finally realized that they were nothing without their teacher.

In the face of danger, other than dragging him down, they were unable to do anything at all.

With his hands behind his back, Sect Leader Luo Huang spoke impassively, "There is a limit to my tolerance. If he were to come out now, I might still consider sparing your lives!"

"I've already said that the young master is in seclusion. No one is to interrupt him now..."

Sun Qiang struggled to his feet and stood before Sect Leader Luo Huang. Zheng Yang and the others also followed suit.

They knew that they weren't a match, but even the slightest time they could stall now would be invaluable for Zhang Xuan. No matter how weak they were, they couldn't back down now.

Zhang Xuan was an important person to them. If the other party wished to cause him any trouble, they would have to step over their corpses to do so!

"Since you are so intent on dying, I'll fulfill your wish! Let's see whether he can continue hiding after his butler and students are dead!"

Seeing how even a group of ants dared to disregard his authority, Sect Leader Luo Huang's face darkened, and killing intent appeared on his face.

You wish to hide behind your butler and students?

Fine, continue doing so then! Let's see how long you can hold out for!

Placing his middle finger on his thumb, just as Sect Leader Luo was about to flick a surge of sword qi toward the group who dared to defy him, he suddenly saw two figures rushing over.

The one in front was an elder who exuded a powerful aura. A hint of worry was etched on his glabella.

"Sect Leader Luo, what are you doing?"

Even before arriving at the residence, the elder roared, and his voice reverberated across the entire residence.

"Zhang shi is a master teacher of our Myriad Kingdom Alliance. For you all to charge

into his residence and injure his butler and students, is this a declaration of war against the Myriad Kingdom Alliance?"

His voice was seething with fury.

Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion's Pavilion Master Kang Gan!

Following behind was a middle-aged man who bore a mark of authority between his brows. With a glance, it was clear that he was a person of great standing... Myriad Kingdom Alliance's Alliance Head Zhao, Zhao Feiwu's father.

Given how huge of a ruckus this matter had caused, it was impossible for them to be unaware of it.

Just that, they never expected for Sect Leader Luo and so many experts to actually seek trouble with a master teacher who had just passed the 4-star master teacher examination.

Even though Zhang Xuan had shown outstanding results in the selection round, this was only in terms of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance's standard. It didn't make any sense for so many experts to confront him together.

"Declaration of war?"

Seeing that Pavilion Master Kang had arrived on the scene, Sect Leader Luo Huang chuckled lightly and dissipated the sword qi he had gathered on his fingertip. Placing his hands behind his back, he said, "Pavilion Master Kang, you're exaggerating the matter. The only reason why we're here is because we've received a complaint regarding Zhang shi, and we would like to weed out a black sheep sullyng the reputation of all master teachers. This has nothing to do with your Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion!"

Narrowing his eyes, Pavilion Master Kang questioned, "Weed out a black sheep? What do you mean by that?"

Sun Qiang and the others were perplexed as well.

These fellows had barged in here, demanding to meet Zhang shi without any reason at all. Yet, all of the sudden, they started talking about weeding out a black sheep...

"Simple. Someone told us that Zhang shi has killed his kin, stole his family heirloom, and eradicated his kingdom!"

Sect Leader Luo Huang raised his eyebrows. "As a master teacher, without the permission of the Master Teacher Pavilion, he wreaked havoc in a kingdom and toppled its order... As half 5-star master teachers, are we unqualified to question him on this matter?"

"This..."

Pavilion Master Kang was stumped.

He had been busy preparing for the Master Teacher Pavilion for the past few months, so he wasn't too sure about the events that transpired in Xuanyuan Kingdom. On top of that, Zhao Feiwu had pushed down the matter so very few people knew about it. Luo Qianhong, out of shame, also didn't report this matter to them as well.

As such, Pavilion Master Kang was unaware of this matter.

"Stole a family heirloom? The matter probably isn't as simple as that!"

Alliance Head Zhao had heard the story from his daughter, but thinking nothing much of it, he didn't enquire about the details.

"Isn't as simple as that? We have an eye-witness here!"

Sect Leader Luo Huang waved his hand, and a single-armed elder walked out from the crowd.

Ding Hong!

Knowing that Zhang Xuan was living in this courtyard, his eyes were burning with fury.

"My grandson, Ding Mu, was killed by Zhang Xuan, and he had one of his acquaintances take control of Xuanyuan Kingdom. In fact, even my arm was severed by him. It is due to him that I was forced to wander around aimlessly with nowhere to return to..."

At which, Ding Hong roared furiously, "And the only reason for his deranged actions is due to a single relic... Kong shi's handwritten letter!"

"Kong shi's handwritten letter?"

Hearing those words, Pavilion Master Kang's eyebrows twitched.

Even though he wasn't too sure what it was, nothing that was related to Kong shi could be ordinary.

"Indeed! Because of this relic, he destroyed my entire clan! Is this an action befitting of a master teacher?" Ding Hong howled.

His words were phrased in an extremely misleading manner. Knowing that master teachers had the ability to discern truth from falsehood, he chose to warp the truth in a manner that sounded as if Zhang Xuan had done all of this just for Kong shi's handwritten letter.

There was nothing wrong with the details-everything that had occurred did originate from Kong shi's handwritten letter, just that the story was presented in a manner biased against Zhang Xuan.

"You're lying! It's your grandson who tried to..."

Seeing the other party twisting the facts around, Zheng Yang was so furious that if he could, he would have rushed forward to tear Ding Hong apart at this instant.

"Audacious! Your seniors are talking, a junior like you have no place to be interrupting in our conversation!"

Before Zheng Yang could finish his words, Sect Leader Luo Huang waved his hands.

Hu!

A surge of energy gushed toward Zheng Yang, Sun Qiang, and the others, sealing their mouths. No matter how much they struggled, they were unable to get a single word out.

"What are you trying to do?" Pavilion Master Kang's face darkened.

"Nothing much. I just don't want others to be interrupting our conversation!"

Sect Leader Luo Huang gazed at Pavilion Master Kang impassively and asked, "You've

heard what the other party had said. As a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, you should be able to easily discern whether this Emperor Ding Hong has lied or not!"

As long as one's cultivation didn't exceed that of a master teacher by too much, it would be impossible for one to get away with lying blatantly to a master teacher. Given the huge disparity between Pavilion Master Kang and Ding Hong cultivation, it was impossible for Pavilion Master Kang to be unable to discern it if the latter was lying.

It was precisely for this reason that the others believed Ding Hong's words regarding Kong shi's handwritten letter and were willing to go to such extent for it.

"This..."

Pavilion Master Kang was stumped.

While this single-armed Emperor Ding Hong's words were emotionally-charged, he could sense that the other party's resentment toward Zhang shi was true.

Zhang shi had killed his grandson and eradicated his kingdom?

All because... he wanted to obtain Kong shi's handwritten letter?

If it was anything else, Pavilion Master Kang would surely defend Zhang shi. After all, in the time that he had been with the latter, he had gained some understanding of the latter's personality.

If he was a greedy person, he wouldn't have given a middle-tier spirit stone to Ruohuan gongzi.

But... Kong shi's handwritten letter possessed an allure that no master teacher could resist.

Could Zhang shi truly be guilty of this?

Seeing the hesitation in Pavilion Master Kang's eyes, Sect Leader Luo Huang immediately stepped forward and announced, "Zhang Xuan has disregarded the master teacher moral code and willfully stole, killed, and usurped the authority from a kingdom. On top of that, as half 5-star master teachers, he failed to observe decorum to greet us, and instead, even allowed his subordinate to insult us. Just by this charge of insubordination in itself, we can report to the headquarters to have him stripped of

his license and indicted by the Hall of Commandment!"

His words were infused with a quality that befuddled one's soul-a unique ability of Consonant Spirit realm experts-that made one inclined to believe his words.

"This matter surely isn't as simple as it sounds. We should first investigate the matter thoroughly before coming to a conclusion..."

Even so, Pavilion Master Kang still felt that it was unlikely for Zhang shi to commit such atrocities.

"Investigate the matter? Do we even need to investigate it? The truth will become clear once we verify whether Kong shi's handwritten letter is on him or not!"

Sect Leader Luo Huang flung his sleeves.

"This..."

Pavilion Master Kang was stumped.

If Kong shi's handwritten letter was truly with Zhang Xuan, then no amount of explanation could cleanse him of this charge.

"Alright, hurry up and get Zhang shi out. Are we going to wait all day for him?"

Frowning, Sect Leader Luo Huang was in the middle of his words when he suddenly felt an indescribably powerful aura from the heaven. After which, an extremely cold voice that was devoid of the slightest emotion boomed in the area.

"To justify your plundering so brazenly with blatant lies, the master teachers of Huanyu Empire sure are shameless!"

At which, a figure suddenly appeared in mid-air. His robes fluttered like an immortal descending from the heavens.

"Flight? S-S-S-S-Saint?"

Sect Leader Luo Huang and the others narrowed their eyes in astonishment.

Chapter 565

I Pronounce All of You Guilty! [2in1]

Only upon reaching Transcendent Mortal 8-dan Ethereal Treading realm would one be able to step on thin air and ascend. But even so, this 'flight' would be limited to vertical displacement and was temporary. As such, it couldn't be considered as flight.

True flight would require one's cultivation to be at Half-Saint at minimum!

Beyond the nine dans of a Fighter was Transcendent Mortal.

And beyond the nine dans of a Transcendent Mortal was Saint.

But even a Half-Saint would only be capable of basic flight. The maneuvers would still be severely restricted.

Yet, the person before them was able to walk on air as though there were transparent steps beneath his feet. As though a haughty deity, he stood in the air, inducing immense fear in those that set their eyes on him.

More importantly, that person's aura was so powerful that they couldn't even begin to gauge the limits to his strength. A powerful pressure pressed down on their soul, forcing them to lower their heads in submission.

The pressure the other party exerted wasn't just limited to their physical body. It penetrated all the way down into their souls, and as though a mountain crushing down on them, it robbed them of all intent to retaliate.

Only one who had surpassed a Half-Saint, a Nascent Saint or even a true Saint, would possess such strength!

Even in Huanyu Empire was one unable to find a single expert of this caliber... Why would one suddenly appear here?

Not to mention... from the looks of it... the other party was speaking up for Zhang Xuan?

Sect Leader Luo Huang and the others felt as though their hearts had been plunged into a lake of frigid water, and their faces turned ghastly pale in fright. Their arrogance from before had faded completely without a trace.

They thought that Zhang Xuan was an insignificant figure with humble origins. And yet, in the blink of an eye, he had turned into a primordial beast who could rip them apart at any moment.

While everyone's knees trembled in fear, Sun Qiang's eyes reddened as he uttered, "Old Master..."

Who else could the powerful person stepping in midair be other than his old master, Yang Xuan?

He had thought that he would truly die in this crisis, but in this crucial moment, the old master had come to their rescue!

"This is... Yang shi?"

The heavily injured Xue Yiyao glanced at the middle-aged man standing in midair and her heart jolted, and her face reddened in agitation.

It was no wonder why Sun Qiang was so confident. Yang shi was indeed worthy of his confidence!

With a strength exceeding that of even 6-star master teachers, the other party might truly be able to heal her soul and make it complete once more!

"Su Fan and Ling Yuheng pays respect to Yang shi!"

At the moment that the entire courtyard was completely silent, two figures suddenly appeared-Su shi and Ling shi.

Even though they had received the news at the same moment as Pavilion Master Kang, due to their weaker cultivation, they had arrived late.

As soon as they arrived, they immediately saw the majestic sight of Yang shi appearing from the heavens, and their hearts immediately jolted. They hurriedly clasped their fists and paid their greetings.

They had already realized that the other party was at least a 6-star master teacher when they first saw the other party's Eye of Insight, but even so, it was the first time they were seeing the might of a 6-star master teacher and it was indeed frightening.

It was impossible to even gather the will to resist the other party.

"Elder, you're mistaken. That is not what I meant..."

Calming himself down, Sect Leader Luo Huang clasped his fist. However, halfway through his words, he suddenly felt a surge of soul energy gushing straight toward him, threatening to tear him apart.

Pu!

Spewing a mouthful of blood, he was knocked eight steps backward.

While he didn't suffer significant physical injuries, his soul was already grievously wounded.

The soul was different from the body. A wound on the body could be healed by consuming pills and nourishing with one's zhenqi. However, a soul could only recuperate slowly with time. This injury would require him at least a century to recover completely!

And... he knew that he didn't have a century ahead of him.

With just his soul, the other party was already able to inflict such severe injuries on him, terminating any chance of future progress in his cultivation. Was this... the might of a Saint?

With a pale face, Sect Leader Luo Huang trembled in fear.

After wounding Sect Leader Luo Huang, the middle-aged man in the sky scanned the area with his cold gaze.

"I, Yang Xuan, prefer to lead a carefree life, so I rarely involve myself in the matters of the world. I have no interest in the affairs of my juniors, and I can't be bothered with what you do either... But you seem to be taking my nonchalance as a sign of weakness and seek to climb over my head. To attempt to challenge me... Who gave you the guts to do so?"

The voice was devoid of any emotions, but it carried irrefutable authority that threatened to crush one if one were to show the slightest defiance.

"We dare not to..."

Sect Leader Luo Huang and the others immediately clasped their trembling fists and bowed their heads. Their eyebrows twitched vigorously, and tears were threatening to spill from their eyes.

Was this... Zhang Xuan's teacher?

Who was the one said that he was only a half 5-star master teacher?

Even a 6-star master teacher wouldn't be as powerful as he was...

"Dare not to? Then why am I seeing a different picture here..."

Yang Xuan flung his sleeves. "You have already barged into my residence. If I were to remain hidden, were you going to have my butler and my grandstudents killed?"

"This..."

Everyone shuddered.

Truthfully, they did harbor such thoughts.

But... if they had known that Zhang Xuan's teacher was such a fearsome figure, they would have never made the trip here.

"We... didn't know that they are related to elder. We beg of you to pardon us for our blindness..." Sect Leader Luo Huang said through gritted teeth.

"Didn't know? After all you have said and done, you wish to justify your actions with ignorance?" Yang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

Panicking, Sect Leader Luo Huang quickly explained, "It's... it's this Ding Hong who looked for us! He said that his family heirloom was stolen by Zhang shi..."

At this instant, he was cursing Ding Hong countless times in his heart.

If not for this fellow for talking about Kong shi's handwritten letter and provoking their greed, they would have never been here.

If they had never attempted to seek trouble with Zhang shi, they would have never met with the other party.

"You are speaking of Kong shi's handwritten letter? You're right, it's with me. Do you want it?" Yang Xuan glanced at Sect Leader Luo Huang coldly.

"I dare not to..." Sect Leader Luo Huang replied with a quivering voice.

He did want Kong shi's handwritten letter, but to take it from this fellow? You must be joking!

"Kong shi's handwritten letter is a family heirloom of my grandstudent, Qu Chong. This Ding Hong's grandson, Ding Mu, injured him, leaving him in a coma. Out of anger, my student, Zhang Xuan, killed him and eradicated the entire Xuanyuan Kingdom Royal Family... To comply with the rules, he conducted a Pavilion Crashing of the local Master Teacher Pavilion and cleared all of the required tests."

At which, Yang Xuan narrowed his eyes, "How... did it become a willful breach of the master teacher moral code from your mouth?"

Under normal circumstances, a master teacher was to uphold a high level of morality at all times, and destroying a kingdom was a definite taboo. But Zhang Xuan did have a compelling reason for his actions, and on top of that, he had obeyed the procedures demanded by the Master Teacher Pavilion. Even if the headquarters were to investigate it, there would be nothing they could hold against him for it.

"I..."

Sect Leader Luo Huang went silent.

Given that even Pavilion Master Kang was unaware of the incident, how could he, as a foreigner, possibly know about the ins and outs of it?

But still, given that the other party was a Saint and a high-rank master teacher, it was unlikely that he would lie, even on behalf of his student.

"As a master teacher, not only did you fail to distinguish right from wrong, you were

even willing to shamelessly slander and attack your fellow peer just to fulfill your own greed..."

With his hands before his back, Yang Xuan glanced coldly at Sect Leader Luo Huang and uttered, "I pronounce you guilty!"

Sect Leader Luo Huang's body immediately stiffened.

"As for Sect Leader Bai, for laying your hands on my butler and spirit beast and disregarding the honor of a higher ranked master teacher, I pronounce you guilty!" Yang Xuan continued.

Sect Leader Bai's body swayed weakly as well.

He was the one who wounded Sun Qiang and the others. At this point, there was nothing he could say in his defense.

As the saying goes, 'assess the owner before beating up his dog'. No matter how weak Sun Qiang was or how infuriating his words were, he was still the subordinate of a Saint. Beating him up was equivalent to humiliating the Saint, disregarding a high-rank master teacher's honor!

Scanning through the crowd, Yang Xuan declared once again, "And all of you, for allowing yourselves to be blinded by falsehood and abusing your authority to fulfill your own greed... I pronounce all of you guilty!"

"We..."

Everyone's lips went pale.

To be pronounced guilty by a Saint meant that there was no way they could make a comeback anymore.

After pronouncing everyone guilty, Yang Xuan turned around to look at Garden Owner Xue, who was lying on the ground.

"Not bad. At such a crucial moment, you were still willing to stand up for your benefactor... I noticed that your soul is injured, and it is capping your cultivation. If you acknowledge me as your teacher, I will solve your problem!"

"I can... acknowledge you as my teacher?"

Garden Owner Xue's face flushed in agitation. This was a hard-to-come-by opportunity, how could she possibly hesitate at such a moment? She immediately fell to the ground and kowtowed. "I, Xue Yiyao, am willing to come under Yang shi's tutelage and command. I vow to never go against your words..."

"Un!"

Yang Xuan nodded his head, and raising his finger, he lightly pointed it toward Xue Yiyao.

Hu!

Garden Owner Xue suddenly felt a will diving straight into her head. It was a cultivation technique to heal one's soul.

Throughout the years, she had been studying the topic of souls so as to fix her own problem. Even though she wasn't a match for soul oracles, her understanding of souls far surpassed the typical Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle experts by a significant amount. As such, despite having only glanced at the cultivation technique once, she was able to gauge that not only would this technique heal her soul perfectly, it would even help to forge her path forward and allow her to successfully advance to Consonant Spirit realm.

"Thank you, Yang shi!"

Agitated, she fell to the ground and kowtowed.

"Could this be... Soul Impartation?"

Seeing how Yang Xuan imparted a cultivation technique to Garden Owner Xue from midair, Sect Leader Luo Huang trembled even more vigorously.

Soul Impartation was a technique that required profound control over one's soul to achieve. Other than the soul oracles of the legends, only 7-star master teachers were capable of such a feat.

The person before them was capable of flight, and his aura felt overwhelming powerful... Given that soul oracles had already gone extinct, that would mean that... it

was likely that he was a 7-star master teacher!

A master teacher of that level could be considered as an expert even among fellow Saints!

If the other party was just a 6-star master teacher, they could still try to talk their way out of it. But 7-star... this was already a level far surpassing their expectations.

Zhang Xuan's teacher... was actually that powerful?

"Demon Cinque Beast, for protecting your owner loyally in the face of danger, you have my commendation!"

Ignoring the shock in everyone's eyes, Yang Xuan turned to the Demon Cinque Beast, raised his hand, and flicked his finger lightly, sending a surge of zhenqi into the latter's body.

Honglong!

In the next instant, the Demon Cinque Beast, as if having consumed a divine pill, released a piercing howl, and its strength surged. At the same time, its soul underwent an evolution as well.

A moment later, its growth in its cultivation slowly came to a halt, and an incredibly powerful aura exuded from it. It didn't pale in comparison to Sect Leader Luo Huang and the others.

Transcendent Mortal 5-dan... Consonant Spirit realm!

After obtaining a surge of zhenqi from Yang shi, the Demon Cinque Beast, who had been trapped at Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle for many years, immediately achieved a breakthrough and successfully reached Consonant Spirit realm.

Possessing the Dragon Bloodline, the Demon Cinque Beast wielded incredible strength and outstanding defensive capability far above its cultivation realm. Even with the strength of a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle, it was able to match a Consonant Spirit realm primary realm cultivator. At its current strength, even a Consonant Spirit realm advanced stage cultivator would find it hard to subdue it.

"To achieve a breakthrough just by receiving a surge of zhenqi, how pure must that

zhenqi be? Could he actually be... an 8-star master teacher?"

Sect Leader Luo Huang's vision went dark, and his despair intensified.

Legend has it that 8-star master teachers would be summoned to the headquarters for an opportunity to further purify their own zhenqi. As such, master teachers of that tier tended to possess extraordinarily pure zhenqi, reaching the level of superior zhenqi.

A zhenqi of that tier, when infused into the body of a spirit beast, could easily induce a Bloodline Evolution, thus allowing it to achieve a breakthrough.

With just a surge of zhenqi, this Yang shi was able to allow the Demon Cinque Beast to achieve a breakthrough, not to mention, Consonant Spirit realm was an extraordinary difficult hurdle to overcome... Indubitably, no 7-star master teacher was capable of such a feat!

Most probably, the other party was a bona fide 8-star master teacher!

A master teacher of that tier was a behemoth-like existence that could cause the entire Huanyu Empire to collapse with just a stomp of his feet...

Realizing this, the faces of all that had come here for Kong shi's handwritten letter here today twitched, and tears streamed down their face.

What the heck was this?

They thought that Zhang Xuan was just a rookie whom they could bully easily. Never in their wildest dreams did they expect his teacher to be an 8-star master teacher!

Before such an expert, even a 6-star master teacher would kneel in deference, needless to say, them!

...

While everyone was about to faint from shock, a distance away from the residence, an elder's footsteps came to an abrupt halt, and his lips trembled ceaselessly.

It was Hong shi, Hong Qian, the 5-star master teacher from Hongfeng Empire who was invited to conduct the Master Teacher Tournament this time around.

He was resting in his residence when he heard of this matter. Thus, he immediately rushed over, hoping to mediate this matter when he saw this sight.

An 8-star master teacher... The number of them could be counted on one's hands, even across the entire Master Teacher Continent, and every single one of them was an incredible existence that no one could utter their name without deference. Why would such a figure come to such a remote location?

"I must report this matter to the headquarters..."

Harboring this thought, Hong shi took out a palm-sized jade token and wrote the news down. A radiance shone from the jade token, and the words disappeared.

Lower tiered kingdoms depend on the massive Communication Wall whereas 5-star master teachers were already granted access to the Communication Jade Token. Through this, they could send messages to the headquarters instantaneously even from the other side of the world.

It wasn't that he was tattling on Yang shi, but that... the appearance of an 8-star master teacher was simply too startling. He didn't dare to hide such news from the headquarter.

...

At that moment, in Hongyuan Tier 1 Empire's Master Teacher Pavilion, Pavilion Master Mo Gaoyuan, a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, was in the midst of conducting his lesson. Along with his words, spiritual energy seemed to naturally gather in the surroundings-Spirit Gathering Dictum. Suddenly, he frowned and flicked his wrist. A jade token appeared in his palm.

"A master teacher whose ranking seemed to exceed 6-star... Yang Xuan?"

Pavilion Master Mo frowned.

While Hong Qian felt that it was likely for Yang Xuan to be a 7-star or even 8-star master teacher, he couldn't verify the matter due to his lacking eye of discernment, and he didn't dare to make claims about things he was unsure of.

Thus, he chose to write what he had observed instead.

"Flight, Soul Impartation, and inducing a breakthrough in a spirit beast with just a surge of zhenqi?"

After reading the information, Pavilion Master Mo's face turned grim.

Based the news that the other party had sent to him, there was a good chance that the other party was an 8-star master teacher. But... why would such a high-rank master teacher appear in an Unranked Empire such as the Myriad Kingdom Alliance?

"Mo Chen, bring the Master Teacher Registry here!"

Pavilion Master Mo turned to look at a middle-aged man behind him.

His student, 5-star pinnacle master teacher, Mo Chen.

"Yes!" Mo Chen turned around and left. Not too long later, he brought back a book with a texture that greatly resembled jade.

Detailed in the Master Teacher Registry was countless names of master teachers all over the continent, and it could be considered as one of the most confidential documents of the Master Teacher Pavilion. Only pavilion masters of higher branches had the qualifications to browse through it. Furthermore, the book had been enchanted with a unique formation that disallowed anyone from remembering its contents. Even if one had a photographic memory, he would find himself forgetting everything within the book moments after browsing through it.

This was a mechanism created to prevent master teachers from falling into a vulnerable state.

Casually opening the book, Pavilion Master Mo began browsing through the pages one line at a time, and it didn't take him too long to finish the book.

"All master teachers above 6-star have been recorded in the book, but there's no one who goes by the name of Yang Xuan..."

Pavilion Master Mo frowned.

If it was just as the other party said, this Yang Xuan was definitely a higher ranked master teacher than him. Even at the minimum, he had to be a 7-star master teacher... But if that was the case, how could his name not be recorded in the Master Teacher

Registry?

"Unless... Yang Xuan is a pseudo identity, or else... he has never taken any higher rank examinations in the Master Teacher Pavilion!"

Recorded in the Master Teacher Registry were the names of those who had taken the master teacher examinations. If the other party had used a false identity, naturally, Pavilion Master Mo wouldn't be able to identify the other party. Otherwise... it would mean that the other party had never taken higher rank examinations!

There were also plenty of master teachers preferred to wander around freely and chose not to bother themselves with examinations. Even though they had managed to reach an astounding level of accomplishment as a master teacher, they didn't bother taking the corresponding examinations. Thus, it was possible for some who carried 5-star emblems to actually possess the strength of a 7-star or 8-star master teacher.

Perhaps Yang Xuan belonged under this category as well.

"But regardless of which case it is, there is a need for me to check it out!"

Thinking so, Pavilion Master Mo stood up.

Given the might the other party had shown up, he had to pay respects to the other party and check out the matter himself.

"Mo Chen, bring the Langya Saint Beast here. I'm going to head out!"

Flinging his sleeves, Pavilion Master Mo kept the Master Teacher Registry properly before turning around to instruct.

Langya Saint Beast was his tamed beast, and its speed was as swift as lightning. In just a single day, it could travel more than a million kilometers!

The Myriad Kingdom Alliance was simply too far away. Even though Pavilion Master Mo was capable of flight, his speed wasn't any faster than a saint beast.

After bringing the saint beast as well, Master Teacher Mo Chen asked, "Where is teacher going? Do you need me to accompany you as well?"

After a moment of hesitation, Pavilion Master Mo replied, "I'm heading to the Myriad

Kingdom Alliance. You should follow me too!"

His student was just a step off from reaching 6-star. Since the other party had asked this question, it might be good to bring him along. This way, he could offer some pointers to the other party so that he could reach 6-star faster.

The duo both had spatial rings, so there wasn't much for them to pack. Leaping on the back of the saint beast, they confirmed the direction of Myriad Kingdom City and set forth.

...

While a 6-star pinnacle master teacher from Hongyuan Empire was making his way to Myriad Kingdom City, on the other hand, Sect Leader Luo Huang was trembling in fear. Knowing that it was unlikely for him to be spared, he gritted his teeth and turned to look at Yang Shi.

"Senior, I acknowledge my sins, and I'm willing to accept any punishment..."

Since the other party had already pronounced him guilty, there was nothing else he could do other than seek the other party's verdict.

"It's good that you've acknowledged your sins. Everyone here can leave after forking out twenty middle-tier spirit stones. As for Sect Leader Luo and Sect Leader Bai, for audaciously insulting my butler and harming my juniors... I don't wish to dirty my hands so... just kill yourselves!" Yang Xuan spoke nonchalantly.

"Kill ourselves?"

Sect Leader Luo Huang and Sect Leader Bai Kaizhi's eyebrows twitched violently.

They thought that the punishment would just be being stripped out their position or suffering grievous torture... They would have accepted as they did deserve it for daring to offend such a high-rank master teacher.

But... death would mean the very end. Once they died, there would be nothing left of them.

"You want me to commit suicide? Dream on! Even though I, Bai Kaizhi, might be weak, I will never do something as foolish as killing myself. Since you are unwilling to do it

yourself in consideration of your standing, I'll just pardon myself and... farewell!"

Howling furiously, Sect Leader Bai Kaizhi stood up and charged out of the residence.

In truth, his thought was simple.

As a high-rank master teacher, it was unlikely for the other party to do something beneath him such as killing him... Since that was the case, there should be no qualms about leaving.

As long as I manage to leave this area successfully, given how large the world is, there would be nothing for me to worry about.

Sneering coldly in his heart, Bai Kaizhi swiftly rushed out.

Using the most formidable movement technique in White Helios Sect in accompaniment with his cultivation as a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan Consonant Spirit realm, he immediately turned into a flash of shadow, and in the blink of an eye, he was already out of the residence.

"This..."

Sect Leader Luo Huang and the others clearly didn't expect Sect Leader Bai to refuse to admit his sins and even ran away. In an instant, they were all dumbfounded.

To dare to escape beneath the eyelids of an 8-star master teacher... He sure was audacious!

But this was indeed a wise decision. If he didn't do so, he would have definitely died here. Since he was already doomed, he might as well grasp onto the final straw of hope and make a gamble!

After all, it was indeed unlikely for an 8-star master teacher to actually make a move on his junior personally!

Just as the crowd was feeling impressed by Sect Leader Bai's decisiveness, the space before them suddenly blurred.

Hong long!

An incomparably powerful might suddenly came crashing down from the sky. Before the escaping Sect Leader Bai could come to a realization, he was already crushed into a lump of meat. A huge depression of ten meters radius appeared in his place.

And soon, a nonchalant voice sounded.

"I've only said that I don't wish to dirty my hands... When did I say that I wouldn't do it myself in consideration of my standing?"

Chapter 566

Invincible

"This..."

"Strong..."

Hearing that voice and looking at that huge depression before their eyes, all color was flushed out from the faces of those present in the area. At that moment, the entire residence fell deathly silent.

Sect Leader Bai wasn't the strongest among them, but he was far from being the weakest. Not to mention, he was known for his speed. Even Sect Leader Luo Huang would trail far behind him in a race.

But... despite his overwhelming speed, he was still killed in less than half a breath...

Not to mention, Yang shi didn't even move in the least. Even though it happened right before them, no one was able to determine how Sect Leader Bai was killed, and how such a huge depression was created.

Judging from the might of the move, putting aside Sect Leader Bai, even if all of them were to team up together, they still wouldn't be able to withstand that attack!

Strong!

Ridiculously strong!

Terrifying!

Everyone trembled uncontrollably as fear seeped out from their hearts and grasped their entirety.

As Yang shi had spoken casually to them, they subconsciously relaxed. Only at this very instant did they realize that... despite being half 5-star master teachers, they were no different from an ant before the eyes of the other party!

Given the other party's strength, even if he were to destroy the entire Huanyu Empire, it was unlikely for the Master Teacher Pavilion to utter a single word of complaint, let alone, half 5-star master teachers like them.

Rules only applied to weaklings!

True experts reasoned with their might. With true strength, even the Master Teacher Pavilion would have to take a step back and give in!

What had happened before them served as the perfect example. Given that an 8-star master teacher was willing to speak nicely to them, they should've just listened obediently. Since Sect Leader Bai decided to defy him, there was no one he could blame for his own foolishness.

To maintain its strength, the Master Teacher Pavilion was also very realistic. It couldn't possibly punish an 8-star master teacher just to redress the grievances of a mere half 5-star ant. Not to mention... this ant even dared to defy the words of a high-rank master teacher. This, in itself, was flouting the rules already!

The hierarchy among master teachers wasn't just for show.

The words of an 8-star master teacher were no different from an imperial edict. When commanded to die, one had no choice but to die. To actually dare to defy orders and attempt to run away, aren't you afraid of implicating your family and your sect? If word were to spread, no one would spare him the slightest sympathy.

If master teachers couldn't even instill discipline and respect among their own ranks, how were they supposed to do the same to the rest of the world?

"Is that... a battle technique or a divine treasure?"

Pavilion Master Kang and Alliance Head Zhao trembled in fear as they stared at the giant depression just outside the residence.

Yang shi had moved way too fast for their eyes to perceive clearly what he had done.

Vaguely, they seemed to have seen a golden book suddenly appearing in midair and smashing down on the other party... But everything happened too quickly for them to verify it.

After all, they had seen cultivators wielding a sword, spear, saber-and the more remote ones-meteor hammer, chain whip, and jagged scissors... But they have never heard of someone wielding a book as a weapon!

A book... No matter how thick it was, it was no different from a brick! Not to mention, its texture was also soft, thus making it incapable of harming the physical body of a Transcendent Mortal. Since that was the case, how could it be used to kill?

If the other party had really used a mere book to smash a Consonant Spirit realm advanced stage expert into minced meat, leaving no grounds for him to react at all, not to mention, creating such a huge depression at that... How strong must he be?

In any case, the techniques of a higher existence like the other party were something unfathomable to them!

"This..."

Everyone was astounded by how Yang shi's killed Sect Leader Bai in a single move, all except for Wang Ying. She was surprised by the formidable might that Yang shi had shown as well, but what that had truly stunned her was something else that she had noticed.

With a weak personality, she didn't stand out against Zhang Xuan's other students. However, she had a meticulous personality that compelled her to pay attention to every slightest detail. This was also the reason why she could keep up with the others despite her lower talent.

As such, she had grasped the cultivation and battle techniques which Zhang shi imparted her very thoroughly.

Wang Ying, Sun Qiang, Zheng Yang, and the others had seen Zhang shi using this technique before, and given that Yang shi was Zhang shi's teacher, it wasn't too surprising for him to be capable of the same technique as well.

But Wang Ying clearly noticed that... when Yang shi executed the technique, his movements were exactly the same as Zhang shi's, just that the former was significantly faster in his movements.

That day, upon seeing Lu Chong being stabbed by the other party, Zhang shi, out of rage, threw out a golden book and smashed the enemies who tried to harm into

minced meat... And his movements were precise the same as Yang shi's at this moment.

Even when executing the same battle technique, everyone had their own quirks that couldn't be copied by another.

It was similar to how an apprentice cook couldn't possibly cook a dish with the exact same appearance and flavor as his teacher.

For both of their actions to be identical, there was only one explanation... that was that the both of them were the same person!

Wang Ying began examining Yang shi thoroughly, and upon catching sight of something, she clasped her mouth in shock.

No doubt, the person standing in the air had many differences from Zhang shi, be it his appearance and his clothing. Logically speaking, Wang Ying should have been unable to determine anything at all. However... she saw a faint grayish mark around Yang shi's neck.

Back then, in the soul oracle tomb, Zhang shi had his neck grabbed by Mo Hunsheng, and even though he managed to reverse the situation then, the encounter had left a grayish mark on his neck. Two months had passed since then, and the grayish mark had faded to the point that it was nearly imperceptible. Even so, if one were to pay careful attention, one could still see the rough outline of it. And just a moment ago, when she met Zhang shi, she saw the very same mark on him...

And the location was completely identical!

For Yang shi to share Zhang shi's mark, and for the both of them to share the exact same techniques...

Furthermore... It seemed like Yang shi and Zhang shi had never appeared together before!

Could it be that...

Yang shi was Zhang shi?

While it was inconceivable, it wasn't entirely impossible. After all, Zhang shi had

disguised himself as Liu shi before, and it took her a long while before she managed to notice anything at all.

Shocked, Wang Ying's body began to sway weakly.

...

Of course, no one noticed what was going through the mind of Wang Ying. Even if they noticed the shock on her face, they would have attributed it to the astounding means Yang shi had displayed.

At this moment, everyone's faces were inhumanly pale, and they dared not utter a single word for fear of bringing Yang shi's wrath upon them.

"I was foolish to allow the greed for Kong shi's handwritten letter to blind my morals. I deserve to die!"

Seeing how not even the corpse of Sect Leader Bai remained, Sect Leader Luo Huang resigned himself to his fate.

Since Yang shi was willing to make a move against Sect Leader Bai, he didn't think that he would be an exception. Rather than defying the other party and potentially bringing wrath upon his family and sect, he might as well give it up.

Gritting his teeth, Sect Leader Luo Huang raised his head, and with determination gleaming in his eyes, he said, "I hope that Yang shi can spare our Fleeting Cloud Sect and my student after my death. This entire operation was an initiative of my own, and they played no part in this..."

It was nothing much for him to die. What was more important was for the Fleeting Cloud Sect to not be implicated by this matter.

If he were to anger the other party, and the other party directed his wrath toward the Fleeting Cloud Sect, it would be too late for regrets.

"Teacher..."

Hearing his teacher resigning himself to his fate and pleading on his behalf, Luo Xuan panicked.

He had already recovered from the injury he had sustained from being crushed by the Demon Cinque Beast, and thus, he followed the group along for this operation. But he never expected to see an 8-star master teacher in action.

"There's no need to speak any further. Have Elder Wang inherit my position after my death..."

Knowing that it was impossible for him to escape from this, Sect Leader Luo Huang calmed down instead and started to delegate his will.

"Teacher..."

Unwilling to see his teacher die, Luo Huang gritted his teeth. Mustering his courage, he walked forward and clasped his fist. "Yang shi, since the rest of us can redeem for our sins by paying spirit stones, can our Fleeting Cloud Sect exchange for my teacher's life by paying a hundred middle-tier spirit stones?"

"What rubbish are you spouting..."

Hearing his disciple speaking such words, Sect Leader Luo Huang immediately rushed forward to stop him.

The other party was an 8-star master teacher. The only reason why he gave such an alternative instead of killing all of them was probably only because he was unwilling to see so many fellow master teachers dying at once...

Do you really think that an expert of the other party's caliber would actually care about that little bit of middle-tier spirit stones?

Putting aside middle-tier spirit stones, even high-tier spirit stones and top-tier spirit stones might not even move him!

To buy my life with just mere spirit stones... How could the other party possibly compromise with such an offering?

The words of an 8-star master teacher were as good as law. Not even a 7-star master teacher could possibly hope to sway the decisions an 8-star master teacher made. To expect to do so with mere middle-tier spirit stones...

If it could be resolved that easily, Sect Leader Bai wouldn't have taken such a huge

gamble, only to end up as meat paste.

Just as he thought that his student was being immature at such a crucial timing and was about to knock the idea off his head, the figure in the air suddenly spoke nonchalantly, "Make it 150 middle-tier spirit stones, and I can spare his life!"

"What?"

For an instant, Sect Leader Luo Huang thought that he was hearing things.

My life... is only worth 150 middle-tier spirit stones.

Middle-tier spirit stones were indeed precious, but given the huge wealth the Fleeting Cloud Sect had accumulated over the years, it wasn't too difficult for them to fork out such a sum.

After all, they had won the championship of the Master Teacher Tournament on many occasions. Just the prize they had earned was already extremely fearsome. Not to mention, the sales of half 5-star master teacher long-range Tutelage Jade Tokens was also a good source of income...

Middle-tier spirit stones were indeed precious, but how could it be compared to his life as the sect leader?

But... the other party actually agreed to such a trade?

While he was overwhelmed with disbelief, Yang Shi's dissatisfied voice sounded from the air.

"Why? Are you reluctant to pay? If that's the case, just kill yourself!"

"We're willing to pay, we're willing to pay!"

Only at this moment could he confirm that it was all true. How could he possibly hesitate at such a crucial juncture? Flinging his wrist, he took out a pile of middle-tier spirit stones, and in an instant, the spiritual energy in the air intensified.

150 middle-tier spirit stones, not one more, not one less.

"Un!"

In the air, Yang shi nodded his head in satisfied. Closing his palm, the middle-tier spirit stones flew into his storage ring.

"Alright, you're spared. As for the others, pay the spirit stones and scram!"

"Yes..."

After paying twenty middle-tier spirit stones each, everyone rushed out of the residence as though frightened animals in a stampede.

Only when they were out of the residence did they heave a sigh of relief. They subconsciously glanced at the huge depression at the entrance, and a bizarre expression crept onto their faces.

Cough cough, Sect Leader Bai sure died a wrongful death...

If he had known earlier that he could buy his life with spirit stones, he would have surely never done something as foolish as that!

To be reduced to meat paste over mere spirit stones, if his soul was looking at this sight, rivers would surely be spilling from his eyes at this very instant...

But still, who could have thought that a life of a sect leader would only be worth 150 middle-tier spirit stones. That was a value even lower than a Consonant Spirit realm spirit beast! What in the world was this?

Even so, from this, they could tell that Yang shi truly didn't care about their lives!

Indeed, how could the life and death of a bunch of ants possibly interest him?

Similarly, they wouldn't have been particularly concerned about the life and death of a mere 1-star master teacher as well.

After walking a safe distance away, Sect Leader Luo Huang heaved a sigh of relief and instructed his disciple, Luo Xuan, "After returning, strictly warn all disciples against offending Zhang shi, his students, and even the common populace of Myriad Kingdom City regardless of the situation!"

"Yang shi isn't a person we can offend. Not even Huanyu Empire and Hongyuan Empire can afford to get on his bad side as well... Putting aside his rank as a master teacher,

just his cultivation itself would make him, even in the territory of a Conferred Empire...

"Invincible!"

Chapter 567

Transcendent Mortal 3-dan Pinnacle [2in1]

"In the territory of a Conferred Empire... Invincible?"

Luo Xuan's body stiffened, and his face went pale in fright.

Similar to the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, the Fleeting Cloud Sect, as a whole, was an Unranked Empire as well. Above them was Huanyu Tier-2 Empire, followed by Hongyuan Tier-1 Empire, and finally, Conferred Empire...

In other words, this Yang shi was an invincible existence even in an empire three levels higher than theirs!

It was no wonder why he didn't care for their lives at all. An expert of that level did possess the qualification to look down on them.

After recovering from the shock, Luo Xuan asked, "Teacher. What about Kong shi's handwritten letter..."

Their main purpose here was to secure Kong shi's handwritten letter. But given the other party's immense might, it would surely be impossible for them to steal it from him, so what else could they do next?

"You'd better forget about the matter regarding Kong shi's handwritten letter. It is best not to get involved in matters concerning high-tier master teachers or else it could bring a huge catastrophe to our sect!" Sect Leader Luo Huang instructed gravely.

To live in this world, one had to know their place. If Yang Xuan was only a half 5-star master teacher or even a 5-star master teacher, even if they couldn't obtain the letter, they would surely spread the news around so that he wouldn't be granted peace. But given that the other party was an 8-star master teacher, if they were to get on his bad side, that would really spell a disaster.

It was an unspoken rule to never speak of the affairs of high-ranked master teachers. Even the Master Teacher Pavilion would step forward to silence them if they dared to

say anything unseemly about Yang shi.

A master teacher of that level was a precious asset to the Master Teacher Pavilion. It would be wise to feign ignorance of the matter unless one was tired of living.

"Yes!" Luo Xuan hurriedly nodded his head.

Just as the saying goes, 'a retainer should never gossip about their emperor'.

To gossip about one's superior was insubordination in itself, and in the strict hierarchy of master teachers, that could possibly warrant death.

"Also, from today onward, try to avoid contact with those from White Helios Sect... They are already done for," Sect Leader Luo Huang said.

White Helios Sect was another gigantic sect of a similar scale to their Fleeting Cloud Sect. In fact, there was a chance that the other party might overtake them in the near future to become the strongest power among the twenty-eight regional powers. But... it was a pity that they offended Yang shi, and their sect leader was killed.

Even if Yang shi was magnanimous enough to spare the White Helios Sect, the other sects would still try to avoid them for fear of getting on Yang shi's bad side. In fact, there might even be some, especially their enemies, who would make use of this opportunity to get even with them. It probably wouldn't take long for them to be split among the other powers and disappear in the annals of history.

This was the influence that a high-tier master teacher possessed.

Every single action of theirs could easily cause a chain effect.

In fact... even if Yang shi didn't make a move, just a word of his could make the other sects charge forward and tear him and Sect Leader Bai apart.

It was precisely the reason why he was willing to sacrifice himself just to have Yang shi's word to spare his sect. As long as Yang shi expressed his agreement to the matter, the other sects, in deference to Yang shi, wouldn't dare go that far.

After all, if Yang shi had agreed to sparing the Fleeting Cloud Sect, an attack on them would mean defying Yang shi, and that was no different from courting death!

The same scene was also occurring in the other sects.

The pressure from Yang shi's appearance was simply too great. Even if they wanted to spread rumors about Kong shi's handwritten letter, Huanyu Empire Master Teacher Pavilion would surely stop and silence them.

...

In the courtyard, everything regained calmness once more.

The fourteen powers who had come haughtily all ended up leaving with their heads lowered after paying twenty middle-tier spirit stones each.

"Yang shi..."

Looking at the expert in the air, Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and the others bowed respectfully.

"Un, you've done well. I'll go to your branch to conduct a lesson when I'm free!"

Yang shi nodded his head in satisfaction.

"Thank you, Yang shi!"

Hearing the promise, Pavilion Master Kang and the others were delighted.

That was possibly an 8-star master teacher! A single lesson of his could possibly save years of needless effort from their part.

"Alright, you all should leave for now!"

After making the promise, Yang shi casually waved them away.

"Yes!"

Hurriedly nodding their heads, Pavilion Master Kang, Alliance Head Zhao, and the others were about to leave when Yang shi suddenly instructed, "Wait a moment. Free their bindings first before leaving!"

Zheng Yang, Sun Qiang, and the others' mouths had been bound by Sect Leader Luo

Huang's zhenqi for trying to explain Zhang shi's actions.

Not expecting the formidable Yang shi to ask them to solve something so simple, Pavilion Master Kang and the others were stunned for a moment. Even so, they stepped forward and freed the few people of their restraints and fed them pills to heal their injuries.

After all was done, they clasped their fists and bowed. "We'll be taking our leave then!"

"Un!"

Yang shi nodded with his head tilted upward, seemingly thinking of something deep and profound. Then, with an unfathomable expression, he placed his hands behind his back and started walking toward the distance.

"Expert! This is a true expert!"

Seeing the other party's disposition and means, Pavilion Master Kang and Alliance Head Zhao found themselves filled with awe for him.

If this didn't constitute as an expert, nothing in the world could!

Despite being a high-rank master teacher, Yang shi didn't abuse his authority and strength and, instead, remained humble and magnanimous. Even though the other party had already barged into his residence, he allowed them to leave after paying some middle-tier spirit stones. And after all was done, he flung his sleeves and left freely, caring not for the matters of the secular world...

At this moment, all they felt for the other party was endless respect and awe.

They bowed to see the other party off when they suddenly heard the sound of something falling from the sky. Sounds reminiscent of 'putong!' and 'aiya!' could be heard. It seemed like someone had fallen from the sky.

They quickly raised their gazes to look around, but Yang shi had already disappeared. All that was left was an endless blue sky.

"Did... Yang shi just fall down?"

The few of them glanced at one another in disbelief.

The person who had just fallen from the sky... couldn't possibly be Yang shi, right?

But as soon as this idea popped into their mind, they immediately shook their heads.

You must be joking!

Yang shi was very possibly an 8-star master teacher, at that level of cultivation even an entire day of flight wouldn't result in his exhaustion. How could he possibly suddenly fall from the sky? He must have moved too fast such that he had disappeared from their eyes.

After reasoning it out within themselves, they hurriedly left the area.

"To think that the old master would be so formidable!"

"Grandteacher is indeed incredible!"

After the departure of the few people, the courtyard fell silent. Sun Qiang, Zheng Yang, and the others were still relishing in the excitement from watching Yang shi's incredible show of strength. Only Wang Ying rushed straight into the courtyard anxiously.

While everyone had been busy recuperating from their injuries, her eyes were fixated on 'Yang shi', and she saw how his face paled and fell from the sky.

If the other party was truly an 8-star master teacher, how could he possibly get exhausted by that short moment of flight and fall from the sky?

Zhang shi must have used some sort of unique method to push himself so as to resolve the crisis.

Upon rushing into the inner courtyard, she glanced at the area where Yang shi fell toward and saw a slight depression on the ground around the size of a head. Most likely, the other party must have crashed into the ground head first. But... why wasn't there anyone around?

"Where is he?"

After overexerting himself and falling from a high altitude, the other party must be injured. But why wasn't he around?

Wang Ying was worried.

"Wang Ying, what are you doing here instead of channeling the medicinal energy from the pill to heal your wounds?"

Just as Wang Ying was about to continue searching, a nonchalant voice sounded. Turning around, she saw Zhang shi standing not too far away with a frown on his face.

With a flushed face, Wang Ying hurriedly explained, "Teacher, I... I seemed to have seen Yang shi falling from the sky, and in fear that he might be injured, I came over to take a look!"

"Injured? You must be jesting. How could a person of my teacher's caliber get injured?"

Frowning, Zhang shi waved his hands casually. "Alright, you should leave and focus on your recuperation. I'm currently discussing Lu Chong's issue with teacher, and I don't wish to be interrupted!"

"Yes, teacher!"

Seeing that Zhang shi's clothes were completely intact, devoid of any signs that he had just fallen from the sky, Wang Ying could only clasp her fist and leave. She was truly perplexed by this bizarreness.

Was she really... mistaken?

Were Yang shi and Zhang shi two different people?

Otherwise, how could Zhang shi possibly be completely fine after falling from the sky, to the extent that there wasn't the slightest disturbance in his zhenqi?

Gritting her teeth, Wang Ying thought confidently, 'Even if I'm mistaken about this matter, I'm certain about the mark Mo Hunsheng left on teacher's neck!'

She had made sure to verify the mark multiple times previously, and she was certain of it! Even if she failed to prove anything this time, she was confident of her conjecture!

'I should try to look for teacher the next time Yang shi appears...' Wang Ying thought.

Since Zhang shi refused to admit the matter, it would be inappropriate for her to ask

about it. The only way she could verify her theory was to confirm that Zhang shi was absent whenever Yang shi was around. If she could prove that, then there was high chance that they were the same person!

By then, Zhang shi wouldn't be able to refute her argument anymore.

With such a thought, Wang Ying left.

As soon as she left, Zhang Xuan immediately smiled bitterly and returned to his room.

If Wang Ying was still present at this moment, she would surely be able to verify that Yang shi and Zhang shi were the same person from his back view.

That's because... the back of Zhang shi's head was cloaked with dust. In fact, even his pants were completely soiled. If not for the stone pillars hiding his figure, he would have surely been exposed.

...

Returning to the room, Zhang Xuan quickly changed his clothes, and only then did he heave a sigh of relief.

Wang Ying's conjecture was spot-on—Yang shi was indeed him.

If he had appeared as Zhang Xuan just now, it was likely that a fight would have broken out. Given his current cultivation realm, he wouldn't be a match for all of those experts.

Left without a choice, he could disguise himself and appear as Yang shi.

As for the powerful aura he exuded, that mainly came from Mo Hunsheng.

After being trapped in the Nine Hearts Lotus for so many years, the other party's grasp over his cultivation became weak, and the only thing impressive about him at the moment was his disposition. But in this situation, it happened to be what Zhang Xuan needed the most.

Due to the other party's accumulation over the years, the powerful aura the other party's soul exuded was comparable to even a Half-Saint. On top of that, in order to further convince the crowd of his cultivation, Zhang Xuan appeared from the skies. From the very start, everyone was already convinced that he was a Saint, and that was

the main reason why he wasn't exposed.

As for Sect Leader Luo Huang's injuries, it was caused by Zhang Xuan's ability as a soul oracle.

His current soul cultivation was at Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle. While it would be hard for him to match the other party in a straightforward fight... in a battle of souls, Zhang Xuan would never lose to the other party.

After all, a Consonant Spirit realm expert would have barely started the cultivation of his soul. There was no way a novice soul could match up to a powerful soul which had even been tempered by the Yin-Yang Lake.

But still, if Sect Leader Luo Huang had retaliated, Zhang Xuan's attack might have collapsed, and he would be exposed. It was fortunate the impression of Yang Shi's invincibility as a Saint had been deeply imprinted into Sect Leader Luo Huang's mind, thus making him dare not retaliate at all for fear of inducing the other party's wrath.

As for the Soul Impartation afterward, while it did look formidable, it was actually rather simple. Back then, Mo Hunsheng had also transferred the soul cultivation techniques to him via the same method, and after grasping it, it wasn't too difficult for him to do the same to Xue Yiyao as well.

And regarding the Demon Cinque Beast's breakthrough, it was something he had done on many occasions before.

Everything was perfect, and the only flaw was the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps. Even with his higher cultivation and zhenqi capacity, he could still only sustain flight for ten minutes or so.

Naturally, the reason why he fell vertically down was due to his zhenqi being sapped dry.

It was fortunate that no one noticed it. Otherwise, all of his effort from before would have gone to waste.

"Sigh, what is this..."

It was just a moment ago that he inspired everyone's awe and fear. Yet, the next instant, he ended up crashing into the ground and nearly spewing blood. The huge contrast

between the two left Zhang Xuan dismal.

The Red Dust Heaven Ascending Step was indeed formidable, and being able to fly was something to rejoice about... However, during its course of activation, one was unable to sense the amount of zhenqi one had left, thus creating a high tendency for one to abruptly fall from the sky.

It was fortunate that Zhang Xuan was able to sustain all the way to the end. Otherwise, if he were to fall in the midst of threatening the others, it would have been hard to explain himself.

"Looks like... Wang Ying managed to see through my disguise!"

Recalling how Wang Ying rushed into the inner courtyard and the doubt on her face, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Given that Wang Ying noticed something as well, there was a good chance that the others might have noticed something as well.

If others were to learn that the unparalleled 'Yang shi' was just a made-up character, the group from before would surely return to cripple him.

"Looks like I should forge my clone soon... With a clone, I would be able to appear simultaneously in both identities, and no one will doubt me anymore!"

Zhang Xuan clasped his fists tightly.

He had learnt the Soul Severing Technique from Mo Hunsheng, and using the Nine Hearts Lotus as the foundation, it wouldn't be too difficult for him to forge a clone. However, it would require vast amount of spiritual energy for him to do so, and thus, he had been putting off the matter. However, with at least 600 middle-tier spirit stones in his possession at the moment, he could afford such expenditure already.

"I should raise my cultivation first!"

The Nine Hearts Lotus hadn't matured yet, and the best way to induce its maturity was through vast quantity of Heaven's Path zhenqi... With so many middle-tier spirit stones in his hand now, that wasn't a problem.

Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out the Spirit Gathering Formation plate, activated

it, and sat in the middle of the formation. Following which, he casually threw out a dozen of middle-tier spirit stones and began driving the Heaven's Path Divine Art. The dense spiritual energy in the surroundings began rushing into his body.

The overwhelming spiritual energy flowing through his body left Zhang Xuan with an indescribably soothing sensation, and warm tears gathered in his eyes.

In the past two months, he had been suffering from a huge shortage of spirit stones, resulting in a huge need for him to be thrifty. This was the first time he could afford to cultivate so extravagantly!

It seemed like there was a need for him to extort from those fellows a few more times in the future. After all, he would surely need even more spirit stones in the future.

Hong long long!

Under the surge of spiritual energy, his consumed zhenqi was swiftly replenished, and soon, with a slight buzzing sound, he reached Transcendent Mortal 2-dan pinnacle!

But Zhang Xuan didn't just stop there.

Origin Energy realm pinnacle!

Yin-Yang realm primary stage!

...

Yin-Yang realm pinnacle!

Two hours later, Zhang Xuan successfully reached Transcendent Mortal 3-dan pinnacle!

His zhenqi strength totaled up to 1,000,000 ding, which was 200,000 ding greater than other Yin-Yang realm pinnacle cultivators. That was already comparable to a Clarifying Turbidity realm primary stage cultivator!

(Ordinary Yin-Yang realm primary stage cultivators possess a strength of 500,000 ding, intermediate stage 600,000 ding, advanced stage 700,000 ding, and pinnacle 800,000 ding! Clarifying Turbidity realm primary stage cultivator start with 1,000,000 ding, intermediate stage 1,200,000 ding, advanced stage 1,400,000 ding, and pinnacle

1,600,000 ding.)

Adding the strength of 1,600,000 ding derived from his soul cultivation, the maximum strength he could wield at the moment was a hulking 2,600,000 ding!

With this strength, he could even match a Consonant Spirit realm intermediate stage expert.

(Consonant Spirit realm primary stage 2,000,000 ding, intermediate stage 2,400,000 ding, advanced stage 2,800,000 ding, and pinnacle 3,200,000 ding,)

That was something completely unheard of!

"Now, I should nurture the Nine Hearts Lotus..."

As Zhang Xuan didn't have sufficient Transcendent Mortal 4-dan cultivation techniques to form the corresponding complete Heaven's Path Divine Art, he could only stop here. Thus, flicking his wrist, he took out the Nine Hearts Lotus, grabbed it, and began infusing huge amount of zhenqi in.

"AH... DON'T KILL ME..."

But as soon as zhenqi seeped into the lotus, a sound reminiscent of a pig being butchered echoed in the air-Mo Hunsheng.

"Ah, pardon me. I forgot your existence..."

Too anxious to nurture the lotus to maturity, Zhang Xuan forgot that the fellow hiding in the lotus was particularly fearful of Heaven's Path zhenqi.

"..." Mo Hunsheng was in tears.

I had just expended myself to save you and you actually forgot about me so quickly? How heartless can you be?

"Don't worry. I'll pull you out now," Zhang Xuan said sheepishly. As long as Mo Hunsheng remained in the lotus, he wouldn't be able to drive the lotus's maturity with his zhenqi.

As a 6-star soul oracle, Mo Hunsheng would be able survive for a very long time out of

the lotus. Otherwise, Zhang Xuan could also loan him the Soulless Metal Humanoid to house his soul.

As for how he should get Mo Hunsheng out, Zhang Xuan had already thought of an idea.

Since the other party needed a soul to take his place so that he could escape, he would just have to make one for him.

"Soul Severing Technique!"

Seated cross-legged, Zhang Xuan drew his soul out. Then, following the method which Mo Hunsheng taught him beforehand, he began splitting his soul in two.

Since there was no other soul he could use, he would just have to use his own.

Furthermore, it just so happened that Zhang Xuan wanted to use the Nine Hearts Lotus to forge a clone. A portion of his soul would have to enter the Nine Hearts Lotus eventually, so this wasn't a problem at all.

Absorbing the dense spiritual energy from the surroundings, Zhang Xuan slowly tore his soul into two.

The severing of a soul was, in essence, no different from tearing one's body into two. The pain that one had to suffer during the process was unimaginable.

Furthermore, it was an extremely risky technique. The slightest mistake could possibly result in the dissipation of one's soul.

If not for having brought the technique up to the level of Heaven's Path, he would have surely dared not cultivate this technique. The success rate was simply too low.

Back then, it had taken astounding luck on Mo Hunsheng's part to successfully split his soul in two.

Soon, the three-meters large soul was severed into two human-sized ones.

"Done..."

After severing his soul, Zhang Xuan had one portion return back to his physical body

before exhaling deeply. At his moment, his face was incomparably white.

"Most probably, I won't be able to utilize my soul energy for a period of time!"

This was unlike what he did in the case of Lu Chong, where he only needed to sever a small portion of it.

This time, his soul was divided in two. It would take at least two months for him to recover to his original condition. He had to avoid using his soul energy during this period of time or else he would risk aggravating his injuries.

Chapter 568

Forging the Clone

But still, it was all worth it.

His soul was divided into two, but he could sense the consciousness of the two, as though his existence had been split in two. Even though his fighting prowess had gone down for the time being, once he recovers, his strength would increase greatly.

Furthermore, given that both minds were linked, and they could communicate via mere thoughts, once they collaborate together, the strength wouldn't be as simple as one plus one equals to two. With perfect teamwork, it could easily be three, four, or even higher.

On top of that, the severed soul was capable of cultivating as well. As time passed, it would only grow stronger and stronger.

"Time to begin!"

The soul glanced at the original body and smiled faintly before dashing into the Nine Hearts Lotus.

Hu!

As soon as it approached the lotus, it immediately felt an overwhelmingly powerful suction force pulling it in into a dark space.

"Master..."

After the soul steadied itself, Zhang Xuan saw middle-aged man standing not too far away. The middle-aged man clasped his fist and greeted the soul respectfully.

Mo Hunsheng!

Considering how that fellow was a 6-star soul oracle and how long he had lived, Zhang Xuan thought that the other party would be an elderly with white hair and beard. Yet,

to his surprise, the other party looked like a fragile scholar instead.

Having signed the Soul Contract, even though Mo Hunsheng had successfully escaped from the Nine Hearts Lotus, he was still Zhang Shi's subordinate. If he were to harbor the slightest thought of defiance, Zhang Shi could easily crush him with a thought.

"Is this your original appearance?" Zhang Xuan's divided soul asked.

As an intangible existence, souls could be morphed to take on any shape.

"Yes. The soul of a soul oracle retains the appearance it had when it was first drawn from the body. This appearance of mine will still remain the same even if I live for another ten thousand years," Mo Hunsheng replied.

While souls could be morphed into countless shapes, they would still have a 'default appearance', which was the form of the body when the soul was first drawn from the body.

"Un. I'm here to replace you. You can leave now!"

The severed soul waved his hand. "However, I can't find a suitable body for you at the moment. You can possess the Soulless Metal Humanoid for the time being. Once I find a physical body suitable for you, I'll allow you to possess it!"

While Mo Hunsheng was powerful enough to exist outside in his soul form, as time passed, he would still suffer from the Five Declines and grow weaker.

The only way to prevent that was for him to possess a suitable body.

As a master teacher, Zhang Xuan couldn't possibly allow his subordinate to possess any innocent bystander. Thus, he could only have the other party possess the Soulless Metal Humanoid for the time being.

As the Soulless Metal Humanoid was a body forged specially for the use of soul oracles, diving in and out of it wouldn't incur the Possession Decline.

"It's no problem. As long as I can leave this darned place, I'm willing to stay anywhere..."

Mo Hunsheng nodded his head excitedly.

He was about to be driven mad from being trapped here for several ten thousand years. As long as he could escape this place, he didn't mind possessing the Soulless Metal Humanoid for the time being.

Besides, Zhang shi had also promised to find a fitting body for him to possess too. There was nothing for him to hesitate for.

"I'll be heading out first then!"

With a bright glow from his soul, Mo Hunsheng dashed out of the Nine Hearts Lotus.

Seemingly realized that Mo Hunsheng was about to leave, a powerful energy lurking in the dark space crept toward him in an attempt to keep him here. However, Zhang Xuan's severed soul harrumphed and blocked its path.

Hu!

The energy was halted for a split moment, and making use of this opportunity, Mo Hunsheng leaped out of the Nine Hearts Lotus and appeared in the outside world.

"You're out!" Zhang Xuan glanced at him.

"Yes!" Having regained his freedom, Mo Hunsheng glanced at his surroundings in agitation.

"You should enter the Soulless Metal Humanoid for the time being!"

With a slight smile, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out a coffin housing a Soulless Metal Humanoid.

Nodding his head, Mo Hunsheng opened the coffin and dived into the Soulless Metal Humanoid. The next moment, the eyes of the Soulless Metal Humanoid opened, and it stood up.

"Master!"

A human-height puppet walked toward Zhang Xuan and bowed grandly, as though a valiant commander greeting his superior.

"You should call me young master like the others!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

"Yes, young master!" The humanoid clasped his fist.

Glancing at the humanoid, Zhang Xuan asked, "How strong are you at the moment, and how much of your strength can you exert at the moment?"

Given Mo Hunsheng's powerful cultivation, there was a good chance that the other party was more powerful than him now that he was freed from the Nine Hearts Lotus, even when he was within the Soulless Metal Humanoid.

"I was the one who crafted these Soulless Metal Humanoids, so I can bring out almost hundred percent of my strength in them!" Mo Hunsheng replied.

"Hundred percent? Meaning, you can bring out the full strength of a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert?" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

The other party was only inches away from achieving the breakthrough to Half-Saint before he was trapped in the Nine Hearts Lotus. Even though he had expended much of his soul energy throughout the years, he was still able to retain his cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 9-dan.

Didn't this mean that he had a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan subordinate beside him now?

With such an expert, even without 'Yang shi's' presence, no one would dare to cause him any trouble!

"Un!" Mo Hunsheng nodded.

"Not bad. For the time being, guard the entrance and don't allow anyone to enter. I'm going to forge my clone and I don't want anyone to interrupt me!" Zhang Xuan instructed.

Mo Hunsheng nodded and left the room.

After which, Zhang Xuan turned his attention to the Nine Hearts Lotus, and a serious expression appeared on his face.

"Time to start!"

With a flick of his finger, a surge of zhenqi gushed into the Nine Hearts Lotus.

The Heaven's Path zhenqi was deadly to Mo Hunsheng due to the imperfections of his Soul Guiding Method, but Zhang Xuan's severed soul didn't possess such weakness. As Zhang Xuan pumped his zhenqi into the Nine Hearts Lotus, its black surface gradually turned white.

This showed that it was gradually maturing.

The lotus required a vast quantity of Heaven's Path zhenqi to mature, but fortunately, Zhang Xuan had sufficient middle-tier spirit stones on hand.

After a period of time, with a light jolt, the last shred of darkness disappeared from the surface of the lotus, resulting in a perfectly milky-white appearance.

"As expected of a God artifact!"

With just a glance, Zhang Xuan felt a jolt run through his body, and he couldn't help but feel allured by the Nine Hearts Lotus.

Previously, the lotus was as black as ink, similar to a demonic tool. However, at this instant, it felt like a treasure that had come from the highest heavens, an inviolable item.

Every single aspect of it spelled extraordinary!

He could foresee that if its existence were to be made known to the public, a huge fight for it would occur. Even 7-star or 8-star master teachers would find themselves unable to hold back their greed.

After all, master teachers were still mortals as well. Unlike true saints, they possessed worldly desires and experienced negative emotions too.

Even the wise Kong shi had once destroyed an entire kingdom out of rage when his student was killed, needless to say, others.

"Forge!"

Knowing how precious this item was, Zhang Xuan decided to get it done as soon as possible. Thus, without any hesitation, he grabbed the lotus and infused a surge of zhenqi into it.

Mo Hunsheng had imparted the way of forging a physical body to him, and it wasn't a very complicated process.

He enveloped the entire lotus with his zhenqi to facilitate the fusing of his severed soul along with the lotus. At the same time, the zhenqi also tempered the lotus, and slowly, a flawless body was being formed.

After some time, the severed soul had fused perfectly with the body, and the formation of the body was complete. Slowly, the pair of eyes on the body opened.

"Done!"

Seeing his clone getting to his feet, Zhang Xuan smiled in delight.

Two pair of eyes in the room stared at one another, and Zhang Xuan suddenly felt a very peculiar sensation. It was as if he was looking into a mirror. At a moment, it felt as though he was the other party, and in the next, it felt as though the other party was him.

As the clone was forged from his soul, it shared the same consciousness as the original body. In fact, even the knowledge and battle techniques they cultivated were shared as well.

In other words, if the clone were to read through a book, the original body would learn the same knowledge as well. But of course, this was all there was to it. The cultivation of the two of them was still separate.

"Currently, the clone is still in its nascent form. The bulk of its cultivation consists from my severed soul. I should first raise its cultivation first!"

The newborn clone possessed no strength whatsoever-even if it did, it mainly originated from the soul fused into the body. It had to start its cultivating its zhenqi from scratch.

After wearing clothes, the clone sat at the center of the Spirit Gathering Formation formed by the formation plate.

Geji! Geji!

The clone began cultivating according to the Heaven's Path Divine Art.

"Hmm?"

A moment later, Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had cultivated the Heaven's Path Divine Art before, and he was very familiar with it. Yet, why was his clone unable to do the same?

The moment his clone tried to do so, an immense pressure would push down on it, threatening to reduce the body into dust if he were to push on.

A conjecture appeared in Zhang Xuan's mind.

"Could it be that... other than my original body, no one else can cultivate Heaven's Path Divine Art, not even my clone?"

He did try to impart the complete Heaven's Path Divine Art to his students before, but none of them had been able to cultivate it for some reason. Left with no choice, he could only modify it or introduce a few minor flaws into the technique.

He thought that it might just be a matter of level of comprehension, but from the looks of it now, given that his clone shared the same consciousness as him, that wasn't the case.

'This might have something to do with the Library of Heaven's Path!' Zhang Xuan thought.

The Library of Heaven's Path had been accompanying him since his rebirth. Perhaps it was only because of its existence that he was able to cultivate the Heaven's Path Divine Art. On the other hand, his clone, even though it was sharing his soul, due to the non-existence of the Library of Heaven's Path to it, was unable to cultivate the Heaven's Path Divine Art.

Most likely, the Library of Heaven's Path was a loophole in the world in itself. The heavens would never allow anyone to peer into its essence, and the very concept of perfection is non-existent in the world. This is a law of the world, and those who attempted to break it would find themselves hindered.

"Since it's impossible, I just have to modify it then!"

Since Heaven's Path Divine Art was out of question, Zhang Xuan would have to

introduce some minor flaws into it. He had done the same for Zhao Ya and the others as well, so it wasn't too difficult for him to do so.

Gugugugu!

Cultivating the Heaven's Path Divine Art with some minor flaws introduced, the clone could finally circulate his zhenqi smoothly without any hiccups, and his aura began growing more and more powerful as his cultivation surged.

As expected of a physical body forged by a God artifact. The cultivation speed of Zhao Ya and the others couldn't begin to compare with it.

In just three short days, it progressed all the way from Fighter 1-dan Juxi realm to Transcendent Mortal 3-dan Yin-Yang realm pinnacle!

In other words, the clone possessed strength equivalent to him now.

While part of the reason was due to there being sufficient spirit stones to fuel his cultivation, it was still a shocking feat.

"This would suffice. There's no need for it to cultivate battle techniques since we can just share them via our souls!"

Given that the clone and the main body shared a common consciousness, they could easily share knowledge. Even without any practice, the clone was able to execute Heaven's Path battle techniques at the same level of the original. But of course, these had to have some minor flaws introduced into them as well.

"Let's see how powerful it is... Come, give me a punch!"

Zhang Xuan looked at his clone with a smile.

Since there was no Strength Measuring Rock Pillar in the room, there was no way to ascertain the current strength of the clone precisely. However, Zhang Xuan could still fathom a rough gauge through trying it out with his own body.

Hu!

The clone sent a punch over, and with a casual smile, Zhang Xuan faced it with one of his own too.

The two punches collided.

Peng!

Before Zhang Xuan could react, he felt a sharp pain on his arm, as though he had been struck by a humongous mountain. He was immediately sent flying, and his head crashed through several layers of walls before being planted in the rock-filled courtyard.

"The heck... What is this..." Zhang Xuan cried.

Chapter 569

Mo Gaoyuan Seeks an Audience

"Sorry but our young master is currently in seclusion; he isn't meeting any guests!"

In the residence, Sun Qiang looked at two individuals apologetically.

The two individuals were Elder Hu and Master Teacher Song Chao. Upon knowing that Zhang Shi was back, they visited the residence everyday no matter how many times the sharp-tongued Sun Qiang tried to chase them away.

"I know, but the tournament is going to begin tomorrow. No matter what, Zhang Shi has to come out of his seclusion today..." Elder Hu smiled awkwardly.

Even though the fourteen powers had hushed all news regarding that incident back then, as one of the powers involved in the tournament, Elder Hu did know a thing or two about it.

To be able to chase away so many powerful experts and keep them completely silenced about the matter afterward, Zhang Shi's background must be astounding.

Thus, even though his original intention was only to buy the Soulless Metal Humanoid, he eventually ended up visiting every day in hopes of forging a close relationship with this Zhang Shi.

"Even though that's true, I can't guarantee you that the young master will come out of his seclusion today..." Sun Qiang nodded his head.

Ever since young master returned, he had locked himself in his room, and it had been half a month since then.

Also, the old master also appeared that once. After that incident, he disappeared without a trace. Even Sun Qiang himself couldn't verify whether these two individuals were truly still in the residence.

"That... After Zhang Shi is out of his seclusion, can Butler Sun send someone to inform

me of the matter? I'm sure you can tell that I'm really interested in buying the Soulless Metal Humanoid," Elder Hu said.

"This..."

Sun Qiang frowned, and the disposition of a high-rank master teacher's butler naturally flowed out of him. "I don't have the rights to make such a decision. It'll depend on the will of the young master. If he is unwilling to meet you, I can't force a meeting either!"

Ever since that day, Sun Qiang's standing had been on a nearly vertical rise, and even Alliance Head Zhao and Pavilion Master Kang had to visit him personally. As time went by, the authority and prestige he enjoyed gradually built on his disposition.

"Indeed! A person of Zhang shi's caliber can't possibly entertain everyone who comes knocking at his door..." Elder Hu played along with Sun Qiang.

"Of course. The young master is a man of great stature. Even Sect Leader Luo Huang of the Fleeting Cloud Sect has been chased away by me in the past few days!" Sun Qiang spoke proudly.

Sect Leader Luo Huang had paid his visit the past few days, but before he could even reach the entrance, he was already chased away by the guards with sticks in their hands.

You must be joking! Surely you should have thought of this possibility when you came to attack us!

To apologize only after learning of our old master's might... Do you think that there is really such a good deal in the world?

"Indeed. A person like Zhang shi is destined for great things. How could it be possibly to meet him that easily? All I hope is that Butler Sun could help to speak up on my behalf before the other party..." Elder Hu's mouth twitched, but he hurriedly continued with his fawning.

But before he could finish his words, a loud explosion sounded, and following which, they saw a figure being planted onto the ground before them.

"Audacious! Do you think that Zhang shi's residence is a place where you can wreak

havoc?"

Seeing how the other party actually dared to make a move here, even going to the extent of tearing down the walls, Elder Hu was just about to display his 'goodwill' toward Zhang shi when Butler Sun rushed forward and asked worriedly, "Young master, what's wrong?"

"Young master? Zhang shi?"

Elder Hu's vision darkened, and his body swayed weakly. For an instant, he felt as though blood was regurgitating in his mouth, threatening to spew out at any moment.

That dirty and unkempt beggar who was head planted into the ground... was Zhang shi?

A man of great stature...

How was that fellow whose head was planted into the ground and was chewing on soil in his mouth... had anything to do with great stature?

He had just gone along with Butler Sun to praise Zhang shi to the point that the latter seemed no different from a deity from the heavens when the latter sudden appeared in such a manner...

Elder Hu felt as though he was about to cry.

And he wasn't the only one who felt that way. Standing beside him, Song Chao's mouth was also twitching violently.

Having met Zhang shi a few times before, he was able to recognize the other party at first sight. There was no doubt-that unseemly person on that floor was indeed Zhang shi. The previous few times, the other party carried such a refined and authoritative disposition that he couldn't help but feel awed toward, but now...

This... was simply too much of an image changer.

"Cough cough cough!"

Plucking his head out of the ground, Zhang Xuan felt dismayed.

Despite being at Transcendent Mortal 3-dan pinnacle as well, not to mention, he cultivated the complete Heaven's Path Divine Art... and yet, he was nearly beaten to death by his clone!

What the heck was this?

For the main body to be unable to match up to the clone... Wasn't he really too useless?

But while he was dismayed, he soon understood the underlying reason behind this matter.

Regardless, the body of his clone was forged out of the Nine Hearts Lotus, a God artifact. Even though the cultivation technique his clone was cultivating was weaker than his, just the might of the physical body itself was easy to make up for its deficiency and even exceed the original body. It would be no joke to say that the clone was an invincible existence in his class.

Unless... Zhang Xuan continued to cultivate the Heaven's Path Golden Body and reached the very limits of it. Otherwise, for a long time, he would remain outclassed by his clone.

"Forget it, since the one stronger than myself is myself, there's no need for me to feel so frustrated over it..." Zhang Xuan consoled himself.

In any case, both bodies could be considered as a part of him, so there was nothing for him to get depressed over.

Seeing Butler Sun's worried look, Zhang Xuan patted the dust off his robe and replied, "I'm fine, there's nothing to worry about. It's just that I met some minor problems with my cultivation a moment ago!"

"Alright!"

Even though Sun Qiang was perplexed to hear that the other party had met with some problems in his cultivation, he suppressed his doubt and clasped his fist, "Young master, Elder Hu and Master Teacher Song Chao from the Blue Frost Sect is here. They are interested in buying your Soulless Metal Humanoid, and they've been visiting for the past few days..."

After a moment of contemplation, Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled the matter.

"Song Chao? Soulless Metal Humanoid?"

Back then, in the Southern Herb Garden, Zhang Xuan convinced Song Chao to purchase a metal coffin for one middle-tier spirit stone, and he promised the latter that as long as he brought sufficient money, he would sell the remaining three Soulless Metal Humanoid to him.

But currently, Mo Hunsheng needed the Soulless Metal Humanoid to house his soul. On top of that, there was a need to keep spare in case one of them wore out in the midst of battle...

If Zhang Xuan were to sell all of them, it would be impossible for him to find a second one in the world.

After all, the occupation of soul oracles had already gone extinct in the world, and the number of Soulless Metal Humanoid was extremely limited in the world. It would be no exaggeration to say that the odds were that he would never find a fifth one in the world.

Besides, Zhang Xuan didn't lack middle-tier spirit stones at the moment, so he wasn't as keen to sell them at the moment.

"Zhang shi, I am Elder Hu from Blue Frost Sect. I believe you have met Master Teacher Song Chao before..."

After a moment of hesitation, Elder Hu and Song Chao stepped forward.

"Un, pleased to meet you, Elder Hu!"

Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and greeted the other party. After which, he scratched his head sheepishly and replied, "Pardon me. I did have three Soulless Metal Humanoid in my hands before but... you came too late. I've already sold them already. I'm afraid that you have made a wasted trip!"

It wasn't convenient for him to talk about Mo Hunsheng, so he decided to just claim that he had already sold the Soulless Metal Humanoids.

"You've sold all of them?" Not expecting for such a hiccup to occur, Elder Hu was taken aback.

"Indeed. You should also know that hidden in the Soulless Metal Humanoids are the secrets of the soul oracles. There are simply too many people interested in buying them, and I only had a few of them in my hands..."

Zhang Xuan waved his hands apologetically when the ground suddenly rumbled, and a towering figure rushed into the hall.

"Young master, what happened? Are you alright?" Mo Hunsheng asked worriedly.

He had been standing guard outside the room so as to ensure the young master's safety. Yet, somehow, the young master still ended up being sent flying. Alarmed, he hurriedly rushed over to check on the young master's condition.

"This is... a living Soulless Metal Humanoid..."

Elder Hu's vision went dark.

Big brother, didn't you just say that you've already sold all of the Soulless Metal Humanoid? For a living one to walk out the next moment... What the heck was this?

"Cough cough!"

Zhang Xuan also didn't expect to be exposed right after he uttered the lie, so his face went red in embarrassment. "Th-this... is not a metal humanoid. It is a guard of mine which cultivated a unique battle technique that resulted in his current appearance!"

"A unique battle technique?"

Elder Hu and Song Chao's bodies swayed weakly.

Do you really think we are blind?

This is obviously a Soulless Metal Humanoid, right?

We are all fellow master teachers. No matter how bad our eyes of discernment are, we can at least distinguish between a normal guard and a puppet.

"Alright!" But even so, since the other was clearly unwilling to broach the topic, they weren't in a good position to ask either. After all, while the Soulless Metal Humanoid was important, it wasn't worth getting on Zhang Shi's bad side for it.

After chatting a while longer, they confirmed that Zhang Shi had no intentions whatsoever to sell the Soulless Metal Humanoid, and thus, Elder Hu and Song Chao could only leave in disappointment.

Before the both of them left, Zhang Xuan instructed them sternly not to spread any news regarding the sentient Soulless Metal Humanoid.

Right after the duo left, Zhang Xuan immediately turned to the tall, golden figure beside him and berated furiously, "To run out in such a form, are you that worried that no one would recognize you?"

The topic of Soulless Metal Humanoids was intricately linked with the soul oracles. If one were to be found running about freely, there would surely bring a huge uproar, and the Master Teacher Pavilion might even choose to conduct an investigation. If so, things could get troublesome.

"I..." Mo Hunsheng also knew that he was too reckless, so he was feeling a little sheepish.

But still, considering that the other party had been trapped for innumerable years in the Nine Hearts Lotus prior to this, he couldn't really be blamed for his lack of consideration. Thus, Zhang Xuan put the matter aside and asked instead, "Is there any way for you to conceal your appearance and aura?"

Mo Hunsheng contemplated for a moment before replying. "There is a way, but it might take a few days..."

"That's good. Then, for the next few days, you should try to stay out of public view..."

Seeing that there was indeed a way for Mo Hunsheng to conceal his aura and his appearance, Zhang Xuan nodded his head. Then, turning to Sun Qiang, he asked, "Butler Sun, in the past few days that I've been in seclusion, did anything happen?"

For the past half a month since he had returned, he had been in seclusion. Thus, there was a need for him to catch up with the latest happenings.

"Reporting to young master, ever since the old master's previous appearance, the other sects and empires have toned it down and the city has become much more peaceful. In the past few days, Pavilion Master Kang, Alliance Head Zhao, and Princess Feiwu have been coming by every day, but after confirming that you were still in

seclusion each time, they would leave in disappointment," Sun Qiang said.

The old master's presence had humbled all of the powers in the city. The arrogant geniuses of powerful sects and empires had become as obedient as domesticated kittens, not daring to cause any trouble at all in fear of getting on Yang shi's bad side. After all, the wrath of an 8-star master teacher was something that neither they nor their sects could bear.

After thinking for a moment, Sun Qiang continued, "Also... the perpetrator of the entire incident, Ding Hong, has been killed by Sect Leader Luo Huang of Fleeting Cloud Sect!"

In truth, Zhang Xuan had wanted to get rid of that ticking time bomb that night, but as he was disguised as Yang Xuan, he would surely have exposed his true cultivation if he were to make a move personally. Besides, it was beneath Yang shi to make a move on such an insignificant ant. As such, he'd had no choice but to hold himself back.

However, it seemed like the sect leader of Fleeting Cloud Sect was indeed a smart man. He probably knew of Yang shi's dilemma and completed the job on the other party's behalf.

"Is there anything else?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Young Master Lu Chong should be waking up in the next few days. Other than that, the only important matter left would be the Master Teacher Tournament..."

Sun Qiang was just about to continue speaking when an impassive voice suddenly rang from the outside.

"Hongyuan Tier-1 Empire Master Teacher Pavilion's Pavilion Master, 6-star pinnacle Master Teacher Mo Gaoyuan, seeks an audience with Yang shi!"

Chapter 570

Yang shi's Disappointment

"6-star master teacher?"

Zhang Xuan's eyebrows twitched, shocked by the sudden appearance of Pavilion Master Mo.

Wasn't the most formidable master teacher in Myriad Kingdom Alliance only at 4-star pinnacle? Where in the world did this 6-star pinnacle master teacher come from?

The fundamental requirement of becoming a 6-star master teacher was a cultivation realm of Transcendent Mortal 9-dan, and a 6-star pinnacle master teacher... was probably a true Saint!

For a Saint to actually seek his audience...

Just the thought of it left Zhang Xuan's hair standing on ends.

Even acting before a half 5-star master teacher was stressful enough for him. There wasn't a single moment throughout the incident which he didn't fear that the other party would see through his disguise. And yet, to do so before a true Saint...

For pretending to a high-rank master teacher and scaring others with a false identity, that was a breach of the master teacher moral code. The other party would reserve all rights to kill him on the spot!

In other words, the moment he was exposed as a fake... that would be the moment he would breathe his last breath!

"The news of Yang shi's appearance must have leaked out..."

Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in dismay.

Given that such a formidable master teacher had run over to seek an audience with Yang shi, that could only mean one possibility... the matter that had happened that day

had reached the ears of Hongyuan Tier-1 Empire.

If Zhang Xuan was a little stronger, he would at least be more confident in his disguise. But the choice wasn't up to him now. The other party was already at his doorstep, he couldn't possibly turn the other party away at this point.

What to do?

"No, I should tell the other party that my teacher isn't around..."

Gritting his teeth, Zhang Xuan was just about to instruct Sun Qiang to relay those words, when the person beside him bellowed, "What are you making such a fuss about? Are you trying to show off your loud voice? Don't you know the basic manners to visiting another? Wait at the doorstep first, I'll report this matter to the old master!"

Zhang Xuan turned his face stiffly around, only to see Sun Qiang with a disdainful expression on his face. Sun Qiang, noticing that the young master's gaze was on him, said contemptuously, "Who does he think he is? So what if he's a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, does he think that he's the only one who can transmit his voice telepathically? Even a 7-star pinnacle master teacher would have to wait obediently at the entrance for the old master to summon him in! To cause such a huge fuss, is he trying to start a revolt?"

Putong!

Zhang Xuan's body suddenly felt weak. In that instant, he even forgot to breathe and nearly died of suffocation.

He was still worried over how he should deal with the 6-star master teacher outside when the fellow beside him uttered such words...

It was too late for him to make excuses now!

No matter what, the other party was a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, a person standing at the very tip of the pyramid known as a Tier-1 Empire. To actually bellow at such a figure like that, sparing him no pride at all... Brother Qiang, you are about to break through the atmosphere!

While tears were streaming down Zhang Xuan's face, Sun Qiang looked at him expectantly and asked, "Young master, wasn't the old master discussing the issue

regarding Young Master Lu Chong with you?"

Lu Chong's soul was simply too strong. Even though Zhang Xuan had successfully awakened him back then, the other party still needed some time for his soul to fuse properly with his body before he would be able to regain consciousness. However, after half a month of conditioning, it should be about time for him to regain consciousness.

"I..."

Hearing the question, Zhang Xuan was stumped.

He had once told Wang Ying that he was discussing with Yang shi on how they could save Lu Chong... Given that Lu Chong was about to wake up already, it was indeed weird how not a trace of Yang shi could be seen.

"Is he in the room? I'll go and ask him whether he wants to meet this 6-star master teacher or not!" Seeing that there was no response from the young master, Sun Qiang continued.

Knowing that it would be impossible for him to reply Sun Qiang's questions, Zhang Xuan hurriedly interjected, "Cough cough, there's no need for it. I'll go ask him myself. For the time being, you should bring Pavilion Master Mo into the main hall..."

"Alright!"

Nodding his head, Sun Qiang headed to the entrance to invite the other party in.

Seeing the other party leave, Zhang Xuan walked toward one of the room in the residence while rubbing his glabella.

After that fellow's intervention, there was no choice but for 'Yang shi' to appear already. But after giving it some thoughts, this matter would be inevitable even if Sun Qiang hadn't said anything. After all, given that the other party had made the journey here from afar, it was indeed dubious if Yang shi didn't appear.

Besides, it was likely that Pavilion Master Mo would return again after failing to meet him this once. In the end, he was just meeting the other party earlier.

But... How should he disguise himself before a 6-star pinnacle master teacher to

convince him?

An expert of that level was likely to have already forged the Eye of Insight, allowing him to see through all falsehood.

He might have been able to pass off as a Saint by utilizing Mo Hunsheng's aura, but if he were to do the same for Pavilion Master Mo as well, he would surely be exposed instantaneously!

The same goes for flight as well. Given that 4-star and 5-star master teachers hadn't come into contact with the ability of flight yet, Zhang Xuan was still able to hoodwink them. To do the same with a Saint was... completely impossible!

There was a fundamental difference between flight induced by a battle technique and the ability of flight that Saints possessed.

"Since nothing works at all... why don't I just abandon all disguise?"

After walking around the room in dilemma, Zhang Xuan suddenly came to a halt.

Since neither his aura nor flight would work... he might as well not disguise himself.

Having made up his mind, Zhang Xuan quickly changed into 'Yang shi's' clothes and walked into the main hall.

...

Mo Gaoyuan was seated on the guest seat in the main hall, and Mo Chen and Hong Qian stood obediently behind him.

Upon arriving at Myriad Kingdom City, Mo Gaoyuan immediately rushed to look for Hong Qian to better understand the affairs that happened that day.

When he heard that Yang shi came from the skies, induced a breakthrough in the Demon Cinque Beast with just a surge of zhenqi, and conducted a Soul Impartation, he was filled with shock.

Wishing to ascertain this matter personally, he brought the both of them along with him to pay Yang shi a visit.

Mo Gaoyuan scanned the surroundings and a frown slowly etched on his forehead.

The layout of the residence was ordinary, resembling not the residence of a high-rank master teacher in the least. More importantly, the spiritual energy in the room was sparse just like anywhere else.

The living quarters of an 8-star master teacher, even without setting up any formation, due to his overwhelming cultivation in itself, could turn a barren plain into a lush field.

Powerful master teachers were aligned with nature, and they would naturally generate a spiritual energy force-field that would nourish their environment wherever they went.

It was precisely due to that reason that the top headquarters of the Master Teacher Pavilion was so concentrated in spiritual energy that even the most ordinary of cultivators would gain the speed of cultivation comparable to the greatest of talents there.

And yet, the residence before him showed no such signs. It was nothing more than an ordinary residence. What was going on?

Just when he was perplexed, a middle-aged man walked into the room.

That middle-aged man had light footsteps, and not the slightest zhenqi disturbance could be felt from him. No matter how one looked at him, he was nothing more than an ordinary human. In fact, one couldn't be blamed if one were to assume that he was a cleaner of the residence.

Just as Mo Gaoyuan was about to ask who was that fellow, Butler Sun hurriedly walked forward and greeted, "Old master!"

Beside him, Hong shi's body also jolted slightly, and the latter hurriedly sent him a telepathic message, "Pavilion Master Gao, this is Yang shi..."

"Him?"

Mo Gaoyuan was stunned.

He had never seen an 8-star master teacher before, but he had seen a 7-star master teacher in the past. Every single movement from a 7-star master teacher seemed to be

harmonized with nature, and it exerted an immense pressure on one... But the person before him truly felt no different from an ordinary man...

8-star master teacher?

Are you mistaken?

Frowning, he glanced at Hong shi, only to see the latter nod his heads to confirm his suspicions. Only then did Mo Gaoyuan stand up and clasp his fists. "Hongyuan Tier-1 Empire Master Teacher Pavilion's Pavilion Master, 6-star pinnacle Master Teacher Mo Gaoyuan pays respect to Yang shi!"

After which, he silently observed the other party carefully.

"Un!"

Yang shi remained nonchalantly after hearing the other party's title. Instead, he simply turned around and walked on the main seat before turning to look at Mo Gaoyuan nonchalantly. "What is the reason for your visit?"

"I..." Not expecting the other party to ask him such a direct question, Mo Gaoyuan was tongue-tied.

After all, he couldn't possibly say that he was unable to find the other party's name on the Master Teacher Registry, so he came to verify whether the other party was a fake.

"I heard that Yang shi has come to the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, and fearing that our reception might be lacking, I decided to come over to take a look..." Mo Gaoyuan replied awkwardly.

But before he could finish his words, the middle-aged man's impassive voice sounded, "Are you done looking?"

"Ah... Yes!"

"Then you may leave now!"

After which, Yang shi stood up, placed his hands behind his back, and started walking out of the room.

"..."

Mo Gaoyuan's lips twitched.

This... What is going on?

Can't we at least converse properly?

Even if you're an 8-star master teacher, surely there's no need for you to act so high and mighty?

No matter what, I'm still a pavilion master of Hongyuan Tier-1 Empire, and I came down specially to pay my respects. Yet, to throw me out like that... aren't you being too impolite?

"To tell Yang shi the truth, I've been facing some problems in my cultivation recently and I would like to consult Yang shi on them..."

Gritting his teeth, Mo Gaoyuan stood up.

He came all the way here from afar, and he couldn't possibly leave just like that!

Since that was the case, he might as well pose a question to the other party. If the other party could easily solve a question that was even beyond him, then there was no doubt about the other party's rank.

On the other hand, if the other party was unable to answer the question, then his position as an 8-star master teacher would indeed be doubtful.

Without turning his head, Yang shi spoke impassively, "Speak!"

"Yes... It's a problem regarding the cultivation of Saint 1-dan..." Mo Gaoyuan hurriedly said.

"Saint 1-dan?"

Zhang Xuan, disguised as Yang shi, nearly keeled over.

I can explain the cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 1-dan, 2-dan, and 3-dan to you perfectly... but Saint?

He had only heard of the name of this cultivation realm just recently, so how could he possibly know the slightest thing about the cultivation of an expert of this level?

Putting aside offering pointer, he hadn't even read books of such a level...

He would surely expose his ignorance the moment he starts to speak on the matter!

Not knowing of the dilemma in 'Yang shi's' mind, Mo Gaoyuan revealed his dilemma.

"...How can one open the Zhukong acupoint without causing one's zhenqi to leak out while maintaining a consistent rise in one's cultivation?"

This question had confused him for a very long time. He'd had to browse through innumerable books before he was able to find the answer. If the other party was able to provide the same answer as him, that would prove that the other party was a high-rank master teacher. Or else... the other party's background would be worth looking into.

"May I know if... Yang shi has any solution to the matter?"

After posing his question, Mo Gaoyuan looked at Yang shi expectantly.

"Zhukong acupoint? Zhenqi leaking out? Maintaining a consistent rise in one's cultivation?"

A mini explosion occurred into Zhang Xuan's head, and he nearly spurted blood.

He had never even heard of this acupoint before, so how could he possibly know anything about zhenqi leaking out and what consistent rise in cultivation? Offering a solution to the problem was even beyond his means.

He was doomed!

"Yang shi..."

A moment had passed, but Yang shi still remained silent. Perplexed, Mo Gaoyuan called him questioningly when a cold harrumph suddenly sounded in the room.

"Are you really a 6-star pinnacle master teacher?"

Yang shi turned to look at Mo Gaoyuan with a cold gaze filled with displeasure.

"I... That's right!"

Mo Gaoyuan was taken aback.

He was the number one expert in Hongyuan Tier-1 Empire, and everyone knew of his name. How could he possibly be a fake?

"That's right? Then why can't you even solve such a simple problem by yourself?"

With his hands behind his back, Yang shi shook his head in disappointment. "Seems like the standards for qualifying as a 6-star master teacher have dropped by a lot in the time that I've been away!"

Chapter 571

Yang shi, I Was Wrong!

Standards for qualifying as 6-star master teacher have dropped?

You're saying that Mo shi isn't qualified as a 6-star master teacher?

Hong Qian and Mo Chen's body trembled violently.

That was the strongest master teacher of Hongyuan Tier-1 Empire. To utter such words means to question the other party's professionalism. That was a huge insult in itself!

As expected, upon hearing those words, Mo Gaoyuan frowned in displeasure. "I passed the 6-star master teacher examination in Tianhong Conferred Empire, and it has been thirty-seven years since then. In the time, I've groomed two 6-star master teachers, twelve 5-star master teachers, and countless 4-star and 3-star master teachers. On top of that, the Hongyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion has achieved the top ten placing in the Master Teacher Tournament three times under me...

"How am I unqualified as a 6-star master teacher? I beseech Yang shi to correct my errors!"

This was a matter concerning his professionalism and pride as a 6-star master teacher. Even if Yang shi was a true 8-star master teacher, he couldn't and wouldn't back down.

"Those who seek to enlighten must be enlightened; those who seek to correct must be correct. Such is the way of a teacher!"

Challenged by the other party, Yang shi retained his usual composure and said, "If a teacher wishes to guide his student down the correct road, he must first ensure that he is on the right path. If he is treading on the wrong path himself, then the higher his achievements, the greater damage he will cause!"

The slightest mistake in a teaching could lead to the greatest of difference. If even the teacher's understanding is wrong, then the more students he had, the further the

wrong teachings would spread, and the greater the harm dealt.

"The question you have just raised can be considered to be one of the simpler ones already. If you can't even solve such a simple question yourself, it only goes to show that your understanding of cultivation is flawed. Under such circumstances, how can you possibly guide your students correctly?"

Yang shi shook his head. "Alright, show me your punching routine so that I can take a look. If I'm not mistaken, given how you are unable to solve such a simple question, you are already going down the wrong path already!"

"Going down the wrong path?"

Mo Gaoyuan's face darkened.

There was no one who could be happy to have such words spoke straight to him.

Not to mention, Mo Gaoyuan knew the answer to that question, and he only wanted to test the other party.

"I don't have an interest in forcing anyone to do anything against their will!" Noting Mo Gaoyuan's silence, the disappointment on Yang shi's face deepened, and he shook his hands helplessly. "Sun Qiang, send the guests off!"

"Sure!"

Sun Qiang walked up and gestured to the door, "This unqualified Mo shi over here, I'll have to ask you to leave. We don't welcome you here!"

"You..." Mo Gaoyuan was in a terrible mood already, and yet, a lowly butler still dared to utter such sarcastic words to him. Infuriated, he nearly coughed out blood.

I could still tolerate it when Yang shi, an existence who could very well be an 8-star master teacher, treats me in such manner... But who do you think you are?

"Who knows how many lives it must have taken you to accumulate sufficient good fortune for the old master to offer you his pointer. All you have to do is to execute your punching routine, and yet, there you are hesitating... It's the first time I'm seeing such a foolish master teacher. And you claim to be a 6-star pinnacle master teacher?"

The disdain on Sun Qiang's face couldn't be any clearer, "Pui!"

Huang dang!

Hong Qian and Mo Chen only felt their vision turning dark, and they nearly fainted on the spot.

Big brother, do you know how respected the person before you is? To dare to speak to him like that...

He is a person closest to becoming a 7-star master teacher in Hongyuan Empire, the number one expert of Hongyuan Empire. Even the emperor had to greet him in the capacity of a student upon seeing him... Yet, a mere Transcendent Mortal 1-dan fatty like you actually dared to utter such disdainful words at him...

'Pui' your head!

Do you think you are qualified to look down on him like that?

"You..."

While the duo was frenzied, Mo Gaoyuan nearly fainted on the spot.

In the past thirty-seven years of his life as a 6-star master teacher, there hadn't been a single person who dared to utter such arrogant words before him. Yet, today, his professionalism was first brought into question and now, he was being looked down upon...

On top of that... the one who looked down on him was a mere subordinate!

His face became as black as the bottom of a pot. Mo Gaoyuan suppressed his rage and said, "Yang shi, it just happens that there's one battle technique that I've been unable to decipher, so I hope that you can enlighten me on my faults!"

Even though he was infuriated by the actions of the fatty, he was still Yang shi's subordinate, so it wouldn't be appropriate for him to lash out at him. Thus, he decided to first test the depths of Yang shi's capability before deciding on his next course of action.

And thus, before the other party could reply, he began executing his battle technique.

As expected of a Saint. As soon as he made a move, an overwhelming might immediately filled the entire room. It felt as though everyone was locked in a cage in the other party's grasp, and there was nowhere to escape to.

Escaping from a Saint... was an impossible feat to them!

To seal even space with a single fist... Fearsome!

After taking a glance at the other party's battle technique, a book immediately appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path, and Yang shi immediately immersed his consciousness in to take a look.

After affirming that the book was on Mo Gaoyuan, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He couldn't help but send Sun Qiang a look of commendation.

To be able to even agitate a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, this fellow was indeed extraordinary.

Hu!

Soon, Mo Gaoyuan finished his punching routine and came to a halt. Clasp his fist, he said, "Yang shi, I seek for your guidance!"

"Un!"

Raising his eyelids, Yang shi walked over and said, "You have practiced your Dual Nascent Dragon Helios Punch well in the past twenty years, having reached Minor Accomplishment in the battle technique!"

Mo Gaoyuan was taken aback.

While there weren't many people who cultivated the Dual Nascent Dragon Helios Punch, it wasn't really an uncommon technique, so it wasn't surprising that Yang shi would recognize it. But... how did the other party manage to accurately guess how long he had practiced the technique for?

After all, there were some talented people who were able to reach Minor Accomplishment within three days of practice while there were some who could never get past Novice despite devoting their entire lives to the technique. Given that Mo Gaoyuan was still a long way away from achieving Major Accomplishment, most

people would have guessed that he hadn't practiced this technique for too long... Yet, the other party was able to guess that he had immersed himself in it for twenty years already. The other party's eye of discernment... was simply way too formidable!

Shocked, Mo Gaoyuan's attitude gradually became respectful, "Yang shi is right. It has been twenty years and one month since I first practiced this technique..."

Knowing that the other party would reply in such a manner, Yang shi wasn't surprised at all. He gazed at the other party impassively and asked, "Do you know the reason why you've only reached Minor Accomplishment in this technique despite practicing it more twenty years?"

"I don't know..."

Mo Gaoyuan shook his head.

He was able to easily reach Major Accomplishment for all other techniques-this was the only battle technique that he had a problem with. He had looked through many books, but he was still unable to understand the reason why.

That was why he intentionally chose to execute this battle technique so as to pose this question to the other party.

"The essence of the Dual Nascent Dragon Helios Punch lies not in 'Dragon Helios' but 'Dual Nascent'!"

Seeing the incomprehension in Mo Gaoyuan's eyes, Yang shi continued, "As the saying goes, 'fist for the young, stick for the veteran'. For a fist technique to be strong, strength is just one factor. More importantly, one must possess vitality as well. The idea of Dual Nascent behind the Dual Nascent Dragon Helios Punch refers to one's body and one's heart!

"If you were only a hundred or so when you first cultivated this fist technique, it wouldn't have taken you too long to reach Major Accomplishment. However, it's a pity that you only started when you were 120. Given that you have already aged, and the vitality in your aura is lacking... it's difficult for you to execute a fist technique meant for youths!

"But of course, you can still make up for the deficiency with a young spirit. Through your deep understanding of battle techniques, it wouldn't be too difficult for you to

reach Major Accomplishment within twenty years... But it's a pity that a fault occurred while you were striving for Void Pursuit realm, causing a trauma in your mind, resulting in your inability to comprehend the true essence of battle techniques!"

"Trauma when striving for Void Pursuit realm... h-how did you know about it?"

Shocked, Mo Gaoyuan was unable to retain his composure.

Saint 1-dan Void Pursuit realm... It represented the will of one to pursuing the essence of space. At this realm, one would gain the ability to soar freely in the sky.

"How did you know?"

Yang shi chuckled lightly. "The Dual Nascent Dragon Helical Punch, despite being known as a fist technique, is actually a technique that, through a firm footing on the ground, channels the strength throughout one's body into one's fist!"

Formidable fist technique tapped into the strength of one's entire body instead of just one's arms.

Upon hearing this, Mo Gaoyuan, as well as Hong Qian and Mo Chen, nodded their heads in agreement.

Yang shi continued, "But... when you launched your fist, your aura was a little unstable. Even though it looked as though you utilized the strength of your entire body, in truth, you only channeled the strength from your ankles upward, excluding your feet! The feet are where the Zhukong acupoint is located, and considering the problem you just asked, it isn't too hard to deduce that you've met with some problem in your breakthrough to Void Pursuit realm!"

It was just a moment ago that Mo Gaoyuan asked 'how can one open the Zhukong acupoint without causing one's zhenqi to leak out while maintaining a consistent rise in one's cultivation... '

For the zhenqi to bypass the feet, where the Zhukong acupoint is located, and taking into account the previous question Mo Gaoyuan asked, it wasn't too difficult to deduce the situation.

"The problem in your cultivation caused your zhenqi to leak from your Zhukong acupoint, thus making it difficult for you to raise your cultivation... As such, you

intentionally had your zhenqi bypass your feet when practicing the Dual Nascent Dragon Helios Punch... Even though you managed to solve your problem eventually, thus allowing your cultivation to improve once more, it's a pity that the habit of avoiding your Zhukong acupoint for your battle techniques has already become deeply ingrained into you over the years, causing your progress in the Dual Nascent Dragon Helios Punch to stagnate!" Yang shi said.

"Th-this..." Mo Gaoyuan's body stiffened, and he fell silent.

The other party's words were spot-on.

Back then, when he was attempting a breakthrough to Void Pursuit realm, he accidentally made a mistake, resulting in a fault in his acupoint which caused his zhenqi to leak out. It was only after many years of studying that he managed to find a solution to his problem, and this Dual Nascent Dragon Helios Punch happened to be a battle technique he cultivated before then.

Mo Gaoyuan was certain that this was his first time meeting Yang shi, and yet, the other party was able to deduce his condition just by looking at his battle technique...

How formidable must his eye of discernment be?

At the very least, he knew that he wasn't capable of such a feat! In fact, even the 7-star master teacher he met back then wouldn't be able to do the same too!

Could the other party really be an... 8-star master teacher?

He had come harboring doubts about the identity of the middle-aged man, but now, he was already seventy to eighty percent convinced.

While Mo Gaoyuan was still in shock, Yang shi's voice continued, "Also, if my eyes don't fail me, you must have met with some kind of danger or were in the midst of a fight when you were attempting a breakthrough to the Void Pursuit realm!"

"Yes..." Mo Gaoyuan nodded.

Back then, he was chased by his enemies, and at that crucial moment, he had no choice but to attempt a breakthrough to Void Pursuit realm to resolve the situation. Even though his breakthrough succeeded, and he managed to slay his enemies with his heightened strength, the forceful breakthrough had resulted in his Zhukong acupoint

being damaged... thus resulting in a whole series of problems.

"As 6-star master teacher, you should have known that achieving a breakthrough to Void Pursuit realm requires absolute tranquility, and one has to slowly nourish the Zhukong realm with one's zhenqi... And yet, you allowed yourself to be put into such a dangerous situation, leaving yourself no choice but to attempt such a dangerous breakthrough!

"You failed to assess your enemies accurately, and you failed to assess yourself accurately as well... Is this a mistake that a high-rank master teacher should make? Saying that you are unqualified is already downplaying the matter! Why? Do you have any objections to what I said? Or rather..."

With a slight frown, a majestic aura suddenly burst forth from Yang shi. "...do you still think that I am a fake?"

"I..."

With a reddened face, Mo Gaoyuan panicked.

"I'm sorry, Yang shi! I was wrong!"

Chapter 572

Lu Chong Awakens

It was true that he visited with the intention of testing the other party!

Having his intentions pointed out so directly left him in an incredibly awkward position.

For him to actually doubt the identity of such a formidable master teacher... It was fortunate that the other party had a good temper. Otherwise, if the other party were to be offended by this matter, even the destruction of the entire Hongyuan Empire wouldn't be sufficient to placate his wrath. Mountains of corpses and rivers of blood would be left in his wake.

"Pavilion Master Mo admitted his mistake?"

"Does this mean that... what Yang shi said was true?"

Hong Qian and Mo Chen glanced at one another in shock.

To be able to deduce this far through a mere punching routine, Yang shi's eye of discernment was nothing short of terrifying... In other words, there was little doubt that he was a bona fide 8-star master teacher!

The moment such a thought surfaced in their minds, a jolt ran through their bodies.

Putting aside the other party's esteemed ranking, just his cultivation as an 8-star master teacher made him a fearsome adversary that few would dare to cross the line with. The might he possessed was so powerful that it would leave any opponent in despair.

"When Yang shi first appeared, I was baffled by the lack of a powerful disposition that any experts should harness. It was as if he was an ordinary human. But thinking about it now, only a master teacher of Yang shi's level would be capable of concealing his cultivation so thoroughly that not even Pavilion Master Mo is capable of peering through his facade!"

"Most choose to use their strength as a tool to win the deference of others. Only a person standing at the very top, having seen through the illusion of glory and prestige, would be willing to humble himself as an ordinary person!"

Harboring such thoughts in mind, their respect for Yang shi deepened.

There were no experts they knew of that could compare to the middle-aged man standing before them!

To view prestige and glory as nothing more than dirt, to remain humble despite being one of the strongest experts on the continent, and that charming confidence and astounding composure... These were qualities that too few possessed.

From the start to the end, the other party never tried to leverage his superior cultivation against them—a common move used to instill respect and fear. Throughout the entire encounter, he remained nothing more than an ordinary person...

Thinking about how they had acted as compared to the other party, they felt deeply ashamed of themselves.

It was no wonder why the butler would act so arrogantly. To the butler of an 8-star master teacher, a 6-star master teacher was indeed not any different from an ordinary person.

In fact... the cultivation they perceived in him might even be fake. There was a good chance that he wasn't just a mere Transcendent Mortal 1-dan cultivator.

After all, how could an 8-star master teacher, a Saint expert, possibly regard a weakling so highly as to allow the other party to serve by his side?

As this thought came to mind, cold sweat drenched their backs.

It was lucky that they had maintained their etiquette before this Butler Sun. If they had really attempted to make a move against him, who knew what would remain of them now?

"There's no need to apologize. It is only right for master teachers to question everything around them. There are those who pass off as high-rank master teachers to deceive others for their own profits, and it is imperative for us to investigate such matters to prevent such frauds from sully the name of the Master Teacher

Pavilion!"

Yang shi didn't seem to have any intention of pursuing Mo Gaoyuan's faults. Instead, with a deep tone, he lectured the other with in the capacity as an elder.

"I've benefited from Yang shi's guidance!"

Mo Gaoyuan quickly stood up and clasped his fist.

"Alright, you may leave now. I don't want anyone to learn of my presence here. You should know what to do." Yang shi waved his hands.

"Yes!" Mo Gaoyuan nodded before retreating from the room with a bent back. Hong Qian and Mo Chen hurriedly followed suit.

Only after leaving the residence did the tenseness finally leave their bodies. Glancing at one another, they subconsciously wiped the cold sweat off their foreheads.

Yang shi didn't fly into a tantrum or suppress them with his cultivation in the encounter. However, his clear eyes made them feel extremely uncomfortable. Those deep eyes seemed to peer right at their souls, and it felt like no disguise or facade could possibly fool those eyes. Before the other party, they felt stark naked.

It took a moment before they finally regained their composure. Mo Chen turned to Mo Gaoyuan and asked, "Teacher, what should we do now?"

"Let's return!"

Mo Gaoyuan waved his hands.

"Return?" Mo Chen was taken aback.

They had taken nearly half a month to get here, and yet, just after trading some words with Yang shi, they were leaving already? Wasn't this a little too fast!

"Since we've already achieved our aim here, what other reasons do we have to remain here?" Mo Gaoyuan shook his head. "Become a nuisance?"

"This..." Mo Chen was tongue-tied.

Indeed, their aim here was to confirm Yang shi's identity, and since they had already achieved what they were here for, remaining here would only incur his displeasure. Since that was the case, they might as well leave immediately.

Hearing that they were about to leave, Hong Qian clasped his fist and asked, "The Master Teacher Tournament is going to commence tomorrow. Since Pavilion Master Mo and Mo shi are here, won't you remain here to host the event?"

If the both of them could host the event, the prestige of the tournament would immediately shoot up several levels. This could also boost the reputation of Huanyu Empire as a whole.

"We'll decline on the offer. Since that is a matter of Huanyu Empire, we shall not get involved in it!" Mo Gaoyuan shook his head.

Huanyu Empire was a Tier-2 Empire under Hongyuan Empire. There might be several troublesome implications if he were to disregard his identity and host the event.

"To tell the truth... Yang shi's direct disciple, Zhang shi, will be participating in the tournament as well," Hong Qian added in hopes of persuading the other party.

"Yang shi's direct disciple?"

Mo Gaoyuan frowned. But soon, he shook his head once more and replied, "I'll still have to pass!"

It wouldn't be good for him to get involved in the affairs of a branch. His prestigious identity as the pavilion master of the Hongyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion meant that even the slightest action and gesture of his could have political implications, so it was imperative for him to act with caution.

"But still, since Zhang shi is participating, allow me to up the stakes!"

Mo Gaoyuan flicked his wrist, and a jade box appeared in his hands. With a light chuckle, he said, "This is a high-tier spirit stone. I shall leave this with you as the prize for the champion of the tournament."

"A high-tier spirit stone?" Hong Qian's breathing hastened.

One high-tier spirit stone was worth ten thousand middle-tier spirit stone.

High-tier spirit stones were an important cultivation resource even to a Saint. Hong Qian had never even seen one before, and yet, Pavilion Master Mo was actually offering it as the prize for the tournament. He couldn't help but feel agitated by the matter.

"Un. Clearly, Yang shi is trying to temper his student through having him participate in this tournament. Since that's the case, I should help to fan the flames through stimulating the motivation of the other competitors. Let's see how this Zhang shi will fare in the tournament this way!" Mo Gaoyuan chuckled.

Since Yang shi wanted to put his student to the test, Mo Gaoyuan decided to lend him a hand.

High-tier spirit stones may mean nothing much to a high-rank master teacher like Yang shi, but to the master teachers from the regions surrounding Huanyu Empire, it was truly a priceless treasure!

Offering this as the reward for the champion would surely motivate the geniuses participating in the tournament to give it their all, and this would in turn serve as a trial to temper Zhang shi.

"Yes!" Understanding the intentions behind Pavilion Master Mo's actions, Hong Qian carefully kept the jade box.

"Host the tournament well. Inform me of the results of the tournament as soon as possible!"

Chuckling lightly, Mo Gaoyuan leaped onto the back of the saint beast with Mo Chen. Just as he was about to set off, he suddenly recalled something and turned around, "You would do well to bury the matter regarding Yang shi's deep in your mind and never speak of it! Warn the various sects and empires participating in the Master Teacher Tournament of this matter as well. If any of them dares to blab on this matter, I'll investigate the matter personally and crush them!"

His voice carried a sharp edge that induced goosebumps on one's skin.

Since Yang shi didn't want anyone to learn of his presence, there was a need to halt the flow of news sternly. Otherwise, if a mishap were to occur and the other party were to go on a rampage, no one would be able to stop him.

"Yes!" Hong Qian nodded.

Hu!

After warning Hong Qian, the saint beast flapped its wings, and before long, the trio disappeared amidst the boundless sky.

...

Mo Gaoyuan and the others left in trepidation, not knowing that Yang shi had also heaved a sigh of relief and wiped the sweat off his forehead upon their departure.

It was truly too tiring to put on an act before a 6-star master teacher.

It was fortunate that the other party didn't utilize or hadn't comprehended the Eye of Insight yet. Otherwise, there was no doubt that Zhang Xuan would have been exposed.

"I should be safe now!"

At the very least, the present crisis was over. By the time the other party realized that something was amiss, Zhang Xuan should already be powerful enough to deal with the situation then.

After this matter, there should be no one who would dare to trifle with him within this period of time.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan was in the midst of contemplating his next course of action when an anxious voice sounded behind him. Lifting his gaze, he saw Wang Ying rushing into the main hall.

"Grandteacher, may I know where Zhang laoshi is? I have something urgent I need to speak to him about..."

"What happened?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"Err... Only Zhang laoshi will be able to help me with this matter..." Wang Ying replied.

Even though there was a troubled look on her face, her eyes were still fixated on the grandteacher before her.

She was eighty percent certain that Yang shi and Zhang shi were the same person. Thus, she intentionally came over at this timing and asked such a question. If Zhang

laoshi remained absent during this entire period of time, she would be able to affirm her conjecture!

"Only I'll be able to help you with the matter? Wang Ying, what matter is it for you to act so secretively?"

Just as she was staring fixatedly at Yang shi to gauge his reactions, an impassive voice suddenly sounded. Turning around, she saw Zhang laoshi walking in from outside. The latter clasped his fist and greeted, "Teacher!"

"Un!" Yang shi nodded.

"This..."

Wang Ying widened her eyes, dumbstruck.

What was going on?

Yang shi and Zhang laoshi actually appeared together? But... aren't they the same person?

Otherwise, how could they possibly have identical marks on their lower jaws?

Wang Ying was completely stunned.

She was extremely confident in her conjecture, and the abrupt situation caught her off-guard. For a moment, she was at a complete loss.

"Wang Ying!" Zhang laoshi called.

"Ah..."

Returning to her senses, Wang Ying's face reddened in embarrassment.

It seemed like she was indeed overthinking the matter.

Zhang laoshi was Yang shi's student, so how could the both of them possibly be the same person? Her eyes must have been playing tricks on her that day.

"Reporting to teacher and grandteacher, Lu Chong has awoken..." Wang Ying

awkwardly clasped her fist.

It had been half a month since Zhang laoshi had used the Soulrouse Grass to save Lu Chong,

"He's awake?" Zhang shi's eyes lit up.

"Yes!" Wang Ying nodded her head.

"You should go over first, I'll hurry over after I'm done!" Zhang shi waved his hands.

"Yes!" Wang Ying said before leaving the room.

Her departure left Zhang shi and Yang shi staring at one another, and after a moment later, the both of them heaved a sigh of relief.

He could tell that Wang Ying was still doubtful of his identity, and thus, he immediately summoned his clone over.

With both Yang shi and Zhang shi appearing at the same place simultaneously, no matter how confident Wang Ying was of her conjecture previously, she would have no choice but to accept it.

"Alright, you should return back to the room to rest first. I'll go take a look on Lu Chong!"

Zhang Xuan waved his hands, gesturing for the clone return to the room. After ensuring that he was gone, he reverted back to his original appearance before walking over to Lu Chong's room.

"Teacher..."

As soon as he entered the room, a young man immediately rushed forward and kneeled before him.

Who else could it be other than Lu Chong!

"Everything is fine as long as you're awake!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

The other party had nearly died in order to save him... It was fortunate that the other

party was fine now. Otherwise, Zhang Xuan would surely blame himself for life.

All of the efforts he had put into saving Lu Chong hadn't gone to vain.

"Hmm? Your cultivation..."

Zhang Xuan was just about to speak when he suddenly noticed Lu Chong's cultivation and froze.

Chapter 573

Lu Chong's Peculiarity

The cultivation of the young man before him was exactly the same as before—Zongshi realm. At the same time, there wasn't the slightest soul energy to be felt within him. It was as if what Zhang Xuan saw before in the other party's consciousness was just a dream.

"Something is wrong..."

Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had once dived into the other party's consciousness, and putting aside how the other party's consciousness extended far beyond where his eye could reach, the other party's soul was also as humongous as a mountain.

A thought popped into Zhang Xuan's mind.

'Is it because he hasn't drawn his soul out yet?'

The strength of one's soul couldn't be perceived that easily. Only when one's soul was drawn out could it be assessed.

Harboring such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan instructed, "I'll impart you a soul cultivation technique. From now on, you should just focus on cultivating your soul; there's no need for you to cultivate your zhenqi anymore!"

Raising his hand, he placed a finger on the other party's glabella.

Weng!

A simplified version of Heaven's Path Soul Guiding Formula appeared in Lu Chong's mind.

Lu Chong's Zongshi realm cultivation wasn't built on zhenqi cultivation but the Poison Body he had cultivated through poison tempering. Physical body cultivation

complemented soul cultivation more than zhenqi cultivation, and thus, Lu Chong would benefit more from this.

"Thank you, teacher!"

After swiftly browsing through the cultivation technique in his mind, Lu Chong turned to look at his teacher and clasped his fist in gratitude.

Even though his soul had gone into dormancy, he was still able to perceive the happenings around him subconsciously through his senses.

In other words, he was well aware of what his teacher had done for him ever since he'd gone into a coma.

Fighting against a Transcendent Mortal realm expert in Xuanyuan Kingdom despite being only at Zhizun realm; buying down the Soulless Metal Humanoid and venturing into the dangerous soul oracle tomb; severing his soul to nurture the Soulruse Grass...

The favor that the other party had shown to him was so great that it would be impossible for him to repay it within this lifetime.

Not only so, the other party even gave him such a valuable cultivation technique without any hesitation...

Clenching his fists tightly in determination, Lu Chong thought, 'Teacher, don't worry. I'll cultivate diligently so as to not disappoint you!'

He used to be a willful and lively person, but after the tragedy that befell his clan, reticence overshadowed all of his traits. Rather than expressing his gratitude verbally, he would rather show it through his diligence and perseverance.

After browsing through the cultivation technique manual twice and memorizing it entirely, Lu Chong exhaled deeply and sat down on the floor.

Zhang Xuan also sat by the side to guard him.

A soul drawn out for the first time was extremely vulnerable. The slightest mistake could possibly cause one's soul to dissipate along with the wind. Back then, Zhang Xuan had drawn his soul out in an underground tomb, and on top of that, he was also

cultivating the complete version of the Soul Guiding Formula. As such, he wasn't exposed to such vulnerability. However, the same couldn't be said for Lu Chong.

Zhang Xuan drew his soul and began observing Lu Chong's condition intently.

Sometime later, Lu Chong's body swayed, and his eyes gleamed brightly. A silhouette sharing the same appearance as him struggled out of his body.

He had succeeded in drawing his soul out!

"Hmm? His soul seems to be weak..."

Zhang Xuan frowned deeply.

Despite having drawn out his soul, Lu Chong still wasn't as powerful as Zhang Xuan thought he would be. Rather, just like any other cultivator drawing his soul out for the first time, his soul was extremely weak, and even the weakest gust of wind could easily dissipate it.

What was going on?

Given the size of the latter's consciousness and soul back then, how could his soul be so weak?

"Teacher!"

The world a soul perceives is very different from what one's eyes can see. Seeing a different world before him, Lu Chong was visibly excited.

"Your soul is still very weak so try to suppress such intense emotions. Take this spirit stone and quickly cultivate to stabilize your soul!"

After throwing a middle-tier spirit stone to Lu Chong, Zhang Xuan tapped his glabella once again, imparting him the Heaven's Path Soul Art.

Not just wind, even intense emotions could induce instability in a nascent soul. Thus, it was best for Lu Chong to cultivate as quickly as possible to stabilize his condition.

But in any case, given that Zhang Xuan was guarding by the side, and there were sufficient cultivation techniques and middle-tier spirit stones to drive Lu Chong's

condition, there shouldn't be any trouble at all. After all, these were much better than the conditions Zhang Xuan had back then.

"Yes!"

Suppressing his emotions, Lu Chong's soul sat before the middle-tier spirit stone and began absorbing the spiritual energy contained within to cultivate.

"His cultivation speed isn't too fast either. Was I really mistaken?" Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

The rate of Lu Chong's cultivation contradicted what Zhang Xuan had seen in the other party's consciousness.

If Lu Chong really possessed Acquired Soul Physique, given his strong fundamentals, his cultivation would surely improve at an unimaginable speed, such that even Zhang Xuan might be left in the dust.

But contrary to Zhang Xuan's conjecture, there was nothing extraordinary about the latter's performance.

Could it be that... he was mistaken? Did Lu Chong not possess Acquired Soul Physique?

But if Zhang Xuan was mistaken, why would Lu Chong's consciousness and soul be that huge?

While thinking about these doubts, Zhang Xuan noticed that Lu Chong's soul had already stabilized. Since the other party had already overcome the vulnerable period, there was no need for him to stand guard anymore. Thus, Zhang Xuan left the room, looked for Mo Hunsheng, and raised his doubts with him.

Even though Mo Hunsheng had already imparted his techniques to him, the other party's knowledge of souls still far surpassed his.

After all, the latter was a 6-star soul oracle who had lived several ten thousand years.

"That... I'm not too sure as well. Why don't I take a look after Young Master Lu Chong is done with his cultivation?"

Mo Hunsheng wasn't too clear what was going on as well, so he could only shake his

head uncertainly.

It would be better if he could take a look personally so as to better understand the situation.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head before returning to his room.

He had spent the entire night guarding Lu Chong for his cultivation, and the Master Teacher Tournament would commence that day. No matter what, Zhang Xuan should make some preparations for it.

While the prize of middle-tier spirit stones was no longer as attractive to him as before, it was still a good opportunity for him to strike out his reputation.

Otherwise, it would be hard for him to advance further as a master teacher.

Walking into the room, Zhang Xuan saw the clone cultivating by the side and said, "From today onward, you're called Clone, and you shall address me as the Main!"

The clone nodded his head.

"I'll be participating in the Master Teacher Tournament soon, so you can't stay here anymore. Otherwise, if someone were to see you while cleaning up the room, it would be difficult for me to explain the matter..."

The residence they were currently staying at was offered by Zhao Feiwu, and there were attendants from the Alliance Head Residence here to tidy up the place. It was one thing if Zhang Xuan was still at the residence, but if he was off participating in the Master Teacher Tournament and one of the attendants were to see another Zhang Xuan here, wouldn't that person be scared to death?

As for disguising himself as Yang Xuan... While the clone was capable of executing Heaven's Path Disguise Art, he didn't possess the Library of Heaven's Path. That made it likely for him to give himself away if he were to meet high-rank master teachers.

The clone had also considered this problem, and he replied, "I'll go into your storage ring then!"

"You can go into my storage ring?" Zhang Xuan was stunned for a moment before a bitter smile appeared on his face.

The space in the storage ring was a vacuum. If any being were to enter the premises, they would die swiftly. Putting aside Transcendent Mortals, even Saints would be unable to survive under such conditions!

However, his clone was different. The physical body of the clone was crafted from a God artifact, the Nine Hearts Lotus. Breathing wasn't required for its existence, flame and water couldn't impair it, swords and sabers couldn't wound it. It wasn't a problem for it to be placed in the storage ring.

However, as Zhang Xuan was too used to the concept of 'lifeforms cannot exist in the storage ring', he instinctively asked the question.

"Store!"

Knowing that the clone could enter his storage ring, Zhang Xuan stretched out his hand and drew the clone into his storage ring.

Hu!

The clone immediately entered the storage ring, disappearing from sight.

Bringing his clone along with him would help him avoid many unnecessary problems. As for Yang shi being absent from the residence... It would only be weird if a high-rank master teacher of the other party's caliber appeared frequently around the residence!

Leaving his room, Zhang Xuan headed for the main hall, where he saw Pavilion Master Kang, Ruohuan gongzi, and a few other people waiting.

At this moment, Ruohuan gongzi had already reinforced his cultivation as a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle sturdily. His eyes were filled with a brilliant energetic glow.

On top of his cultivation, it seemed like his comprehension of master teachers as an occupation had deepened significantly.

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, Pavilion Master Kang chuckled and gestured.

"The Master Teacher Tournament is a public event, and it will be conducted on the field outside the Alliance Head Residence. Zhang shi, let's proceed over!"

"Alright!"

Nodding, Zhang Xuan was just about to leave when a figure suddenly stood in front of him.

"Senior, I'll accompany you!"

"Se-senior?"

Zhang Xuan was taken aback. Turning around, he saw that Garden Owner Xue was in the room as well.

At this very moment, Garden Owner Xue exuded a steady aura which reflected perfect harmony between her soul and her physical body. Clearly, she had broken through her bottleneck and reached Transcendent Mortal 5-dan, Consonant Spirit realm!

It was only due to the impairment of her soul previously that she had been unable to progress any further from Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle.

But half a month ago, 'Yang shi' imparted her a technique that could heal her impaired soul. Along with the strong foundation she had built up through the years, she successfully advanced to become a Consonant Spirit realm expert.

On top of that, one could vaguely sense that her cultivation had already reached Consonant Spirit realm primary stage pinnacle. All she was lacking now was an impetus to advance to intermediate stage.

Zhang Xuan was initially surprised by the rapid growth of the latter, but after thinking about it, he soon came to a realization.

In order to treat her impaired soul, Garden Owner Xue had been spending the past few decades absorbing the spirit of the medicinal herbs in her herb field. Even though it wasn't able to heal her impaired soul, it didn't go to waste either. If Zhang Xuan's conjecture wasn't off, there was a good chance that her cultivation would surge all the way to Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle within a short period of time.

"Indeed. Yang shi has accepted me as his student, and given that you're his direct disciple... Isn't it only right for me to address you as senior?" Garden Owner Xue clasped her fist.

"Ah... That's true!" Only then did it hit Zhang Xuan.

That day, due to the urgent circumstances, he knew that there was a chance that his 'scare' might not work. Thus, he accepted Xue Yiyao as his student and imparted her with a technique to resolve the issue of her impaired soul.

Through doing so, he would be able to earn her gratitude.

And fortunately, everything went according to plan. A golden page was formed out of her gratitude, and it was through this that Zhang Xuan was able to smash Sect Leader Bai, thus successfully instilling fear into the others.

It was on a whim that he decided to do so—after all, there was no better solution then—so he forgot about the matter after that. He didn't expect the other party to take it seriously.

Given that Garden Owner Xue was 'Yang shi's' student and Zhang Xuan was the direct disciple, given the higher ranking of direct disciples in the lineage, it was indeed right for her to address him as such.

"There won't be any danger in the Master Teacher Tournament, so you need not worry about it. It would be better if you stood guard here!"

Even though he knew that the other party was doing this out of goodwill, Zhang Xuan waved his hands to turn her down.

Given that the Master Teacher Tournament was an activity organized by the Master Teacher Pavilion, anyone who dares to cause trouble in it would be deemed as an enemy of the Master Teacher Tournament. There was no one who would dare to take such a risk. Thus, it was unlikely there would be any threat to Zhang Xuan's safety.

"This..." Garden Owner Xue hesitated.

"Don't worry, I'll be fine!"

Waving his hands, Zhang Xuan followed behind Pavilion Master Kang and walked out of the main hall.

'Master Teacher Tournament, here I come!'

Chapter 574

Prize of the Tournament

The reason why Zhang Xuan had traveled all the way to the Myriad Kingdom Alliance was for this tournament. While the final prize was only a hundred middle-tier spirit stones—it no longer possessed as much of an allure to him anymore with his newfound wealth—as long as he emerged as the champion, he would become highly-regarded by the Master Teacher Pavilion. With such, it would be easier for him to gain access to Transcendent Mortal 4-dan cultivation techniques.

Besides, his cultivation and capability had already reached a bottleneck in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. If he wanted to progress any further, he would need to venture into higher tiered empires. The top ten of this tournament will gain the chance to study at Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and this was a good opportunity as well.

Thus, Zhang Xuan still bore some expectations for the Master Teacher Tournament.

"Zhang shi, I've spent the last few days compiling a list of potential contenders for the top ten places. You should take a look..."

Pavilion Master Kang handed a book over.

He hadn't been idling about the past half a month either. He'd had his men investigate the other powers, and eventually, he managed to compile this list. With this list, the participants of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance would be able to prepare themselves. After all, like the saying goes, 'If you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles'.

"Thank you!"

Knowing that the other party had put in a lot of effort into the list, Zhang Xuan nodded his head and casually flipped it open.

"The number one contender to look out for is Luo Xuan, the direct disciple of Sect Leader Luo Huang of Fleeting Cloud Sect. 4-star pinnacle master teacher. Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle. Supporting occupations: 4-star physician, 4-star

formation master..."

"This fellow is actually the number one contender to look out for?" A bizarre expression appeared on Zhang Xuan's face.

Zhang Xuan remembered this fellow. Half a month ago, he used 150 middle-tier spirit stones to bargain with 'Yang shi' for Sect Leader Luo Huang's life.

Based on what Sun Qiang had said regarding the other party, it seemed like the other party had also nearly died from being crushed under the Demon Cinque Beast.

This kind of fool was actually the number one contender for the champion seat of the Master Teacher Tournament?

"Cough cough!" Seeing Zhang Xuan's bizarre gaze, Pavilion Master Kang immediately deduced what he was thinking about and coughed. "Actually, Luo Xuan isn't as bad as you think. He's extremely strong, and even if I were to go against him, it would be hard to tell who would emerge triumphant..."

After a moment of contemplation, Zhang Xuan nodded his head in agreement.

The Demon Cinque Beast possessed the Dragon Bloodline; it was normal for cultivators of the same cultivation level to be unable to match up to it. By no means should one judge Luo Xuan's strength through that encounter! And of course, when Zhang Xuan met the latter in the capacity as 'Yang shi', given how even half 5-star master teachers dared not utter a single word of dissonance, naturally, a 4-star pinnacle master teacher like him wouldn't dare to get ahead of himself.

So, in truth, Luo Xuan was still quite a fearsome adversary to face.

At the very least, there were very few cultivators at Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle who would be a match for him.

"But of course, even though he is placed number one in the contenders to look out for in the tournament, the truth is that the capabilities of the top ten on the list are around the same level. It'll be hard to say for sure who would be in the first place!" Pavilion Master Kang continued.

Noting that, Zhang Xuan continued looking through the list.

And just as Pavilion Master Kang said, there really wasn't much disparity in the capabilities of the top ten. They were all 4-star master teacher, Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle experts.

Given that they possessed similar cultivation realms and master teacher ranking, it would be impossible to tell who was above whom.

It didn't take long for Zhang Xuan to finish browsing through the book.

Of the twenty-eight powers, a total of fifty-six participants had been elected, and even the weakest of them was a 4-star primary master teacher... in other words, Zhang Xuan was the weakest of the lot.

And considering how Ruohuan gongzi was the only 4-star master teacher back in the selection rounds, it was no wonder why the Myriad Kingdom Alliance was always placed in the lower rankings each tournament...

Furthermore, only powers with talents who placed amongst the top in the tournament would be granted better resources, and it was through such resources that they would be able to groom even more formidable master teachers... And vice-versa.

Thus, this formed both a virtuous cycle and a vicious cycle.

It wouldn't be a mistake to say that if the Myriad Kingdom Alliance were to continue with its placing in the Master Teacher Tournament, it would be a matter of time before it was annexed by other powers, turning it into a mere name in history books.

This was precisely the reason why every single power viewed the Master Teacher Tournament with utmost importance, not daring to let their guard down at all.

"Song Chao?"

As he browsed through the book once more, in the twenty-fifth rank, he saw a familiar name-Song Chao.

He didn't expect the fellow whom he had beguiled for so many times to be placed so highly in the list of contenders.

Digesting the information, Zhang Xuan gained a good grasp of the various contenders in the tournament.

"Zhang shi, your knowledge as a master teacher and in your supporting occupation is unmatched by any of the participants in the Master Teacher Tournament. Even though your cultivation is slightly lacking, as long as your luck is good, getting into the top ten... shouldn't be a problem at all!" Pavilion Master consoled.

Zhang shi had accomplished extraordinary feats in the selection rounds, but before so many geniuses, his radiance became dim. Putting others aside, just his cultivation alone would pose a fatal weakness to him.

It was just like the wooden planks making up a pail; only when all of them were long could one fill the pail with more water. As long as one of the wooden planks was short, it would be all for naught.

Similarly, Master Teacher Tournament assessed one's overall strength. Even if one was proficient in everything except for one aspect, that single aspect would be exploited by one's competitors. Under such circumstances, it would be impossible for Zhang Xuan to achieve an even higher placing than that.

Knowing what Pavilion Master Kang was worried about, Zhang Xuan asked, "Are the tests for the tournament decided yet?"

Pavilion Master Kang pondered for a moment before replying. "It has already been decided... but we aren't privy to such information. The tests are decided solely by Hong shi, and to uphold fairness, it was decided that he will announce the tests on the spot!"

Even Pavilion Master Kang wasn't entitled to the contents of the examination. Otherwise, there was a possibility that he could conduct special training for the Myriad Kingdom Alliance's participants to have them adapt to the conditions they would be subjected to in the tournament. If so, that would compromise the integrity of the tournament.

In any case, given that it was Hong shi hosting the event, as a 5-star master teacher and a master teacher of Hongfeng Empire, there was no need for anyone to worry about him siding with powers.

Hongfeng Empire was a vassal empire directly under Huanyu Empire, and it was significantly stronger than Fleeting Cloud Sect, White Helios Sect, Myriad Kingdom Alliance, and powers of that level.

Even among Unranked Empires, it was ranked at the forefront.

"Even though I'm not too sure what the tests will be, there has been some news on the prize recently!" Pavilion Master Kang's eyes glowed in agitation.

"Prize? Isn't it a hundred middle-tier spirit stones and the opportunity to study in Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?" Zhang Xuan asked in bewilderment.

Zhang Xuan had heard of it from Su Shi back then, and there was nothing to be awed about.

"That was indeed the case back then, but the prize has been raised recently. The new prize is so high that even I can't help but feel moved!" Pavilion Master Kang said excitedly.

Last night, the heads of the various powers in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance received news from Hong Shi regarding the increase in the prize of the tournament. When he first set eyes on the information regarding the prize, despite being a top expert and the head of a Master Teacher Pavilion, his breathing couldn't help but hasten, and his eyes widened uncontrollably in disbelief.

He thought that the prize offered previously was already sufficiently generous, but compared to the new one... It was nothing at all! It was as though an ant meeting an elephant!

"Oh? What is the new prize offered?" Zhang Xuan asked in interest.

"The one who is placed first in the tournament will receive a high-tier spirit stone!" Pavilion Master Kang said.

"High-tier spirit stone?"

Wasn't it a hundred middle-tier spirit stone? How did it turn into a high-tier spirit stone?

As though fearing that Zhang Xuan couldn't understand the value of a high-tier spirit stone, Pavilion Master Kang explained, "A high-tier spirit stone has the value equivalent to ten thousand middle-tier spirit stone, and that's assuming that there's a person willing to sell it! Its value is unimaginable!"

"Ten thousand middle-tier spirit stones?" Zhang Xuan's breathing hastened as well.

He had worked so hard, putting himself at grievous risk, only to extort 600 middle-tier spirit stones from the Fleeting Cloud Sect and thirteen other powers. Yet, to think that being placed first in the tournament would earn him a high-tier spirit stone straight... This was way too exaggerated!

"Indeed! And on top of the opportunity to study at Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, he will also be allowed to cultivate in 'Cleansing Lake' for three days..." Pavilion Master Kang continued.

"Cleansing Lake? What's that?" Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

"It's one of the greatest treasures of Huanyu Empire's royalty, as well as the greatest foundation behind its establishment!"

Unconcealable envy shone in Pavilion Master Kang's eyes as he said, "Cultivators who have managed to reach Clarifying Turbidity realm understand that 'turbid' and 'clear' also refers to one's physical body and soul respectively. The Cleansing Lake is a blessed land that nourishes one's soul. Cultivating there, one's soul would undergo a metamorphosis, thus increasing one's chance of achieving a breakthrough to Consonant Spirit realm significantly!

"If I were to get a chance to cultivate there for three days, the chances of me being able to reach Consonant Spirit realm would surely be more than fifty percent! However... the Cleansing Lake is one of the most precious resources of Huanyu Empire, and there are limited slots to its use. Only for the Master Teacher Tournament, which happens once every decade, are they willing to spare a few slots!"

Zhang Xuan nodded his head calmly in response, but on the inside, he was astonished.

To increase the chances of Pavilion Master Kang advancing to Consonant Spirit realm to more than fifty percent, that Cleansing Lake was indeed formidable!

A high-tier spirit stone, the opportunity to study at Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and three days of cultivation in the Cleansing Lake...

Honestly, just any single one of them was enough to send countless experts into frenzy. And yet, for the three of them to be the prize of the champion of the Master Teacher Pavilion, fearsome!

"What about the second place?"

Since the reward for the first place was so generous, what about the second place?

"The second pales a lot in comparison. It's three hundred middle-tier spirit stones, the opportunity to study at Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and two days in the Cleansing Lake!" Pavilion Master Kang replied.

Even though it was just a single placing, the rewards had decreased by manifolds.

Putting aside the reduction of a single day in Cleansing Lake, there was a difference of thirty times in value between a high-tier spirit stone and three hundred middle-tier spirit stones.

"And the third place is one hundred middle-tier spirit stone and one day in the Cleansing Lake. As for the fourth to tenth place, they won't be allowed to enter the Cleansing Lake, and they will only be given ten middle-tier spirit stones each. But fortunately, all of them will be given the opportunity to study at Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy."

Pavilion Master Kang recounted the rewards of the top ten of the Master Teacher Tournament.

"Seems like... I really must take the first place!"

Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly.

He was still thinking that it would suffice as long as he got into the top ten in the tournament, but with the increased rewards... his determination to obtain the first position was sparked.

Putting aside everything else, just the high-tier spirit stone in itself was invaluable to him.

With this, he could probably cultivate all the way to the pinnacle of the Transcendent Mortal without worrying about spirit stones.

Hearing Zhang Xuan's words, Pavilion Master Kang smiled bitterly.

"Indeed, it would be good to take the first place. However... how could it be so easy?"

There wasn't anyone who wasn't interested in the first place, especially with the increased reward. But considering the talented geniuses who would be participating in the tournament, it would be no easy feat.

Yang shi was a formidable master teacher; there were probably none who would dare to cross his path. However, Yang shi's existence was only known amongst the top echelons of the fourteen powers, the participants of the tournament were unaware of it.

Thus, there would be no one who would go easy on Zhang shi just because he was Yang shi's student.

Zhang shi might be formidable in other aspects... but when it comes to a battle of cultivation, he stood little hope.

Even though Pavilion Master Kang had entrusted his hopes to Zhang shi, he didn't bear much expectation for the latter to take down the champion position.

"We're here!"

Upon hearing Pavilion Master Kang's sigh, Zhang Xuan was just about to speak but Ruohuan gongzi's voice sounded. Lifting his gaze, he realized that they had already arrived in the square in front of the Alliance Head Residence. At the current moment, the square was bustling with huge crowds.

After so many days, the Master Teacher Tournament... was finally going to begin!

Chapter 575

Rules of the Tournament

Walking along the packed crowd, Zhang Xuan saw a huge round stage placed at the center of the square. The top of the stage was veiled beneath a layer of fog, making it impossible to perceive what was hidden inside.

Most likely, this should be a formation preventing anyone from peering into the contents inside.

Countless master teachers, dressed in robes, were seated around the stage.

Zhang Xuan briefly scanned the surroundings with his gaze.

As expected of the Master Teacher Tournament. There was a total of several thousand people from all 28 powers, including the Myriad Kingdom Alliance. Every single one had an emblem reflecting their respective ranks pinned on their chests, and reflected light glared from them.

How many times in one's life could one see such a grand festival where several thousand master teachers were gathered together? It was no wonder why the citizens of Myriad Kingdom Alliance were so excited, camping at the square from such early hours.

In order to prevent any accidents from occurring, the Alliance Head Residence had been making preparations from half a month ago. All of their elites were stationed around the area, ready to take any countermeasures should any unexpected situation occur.

"So, this is the Master Teacher Tournament... So many master teachers are gathered here!"

"It's so difficult to meet even a single one of those lofty master teachers under normal circumstances, and yet, a few thousand of them were gathered here today..."

"To be able to see so many formidable master teachers competing against one another,

I would have no regrets even if I were to drop dead now!"

...

Such discussions were occurring throughout the crowd. Their excitement over the Master Teacher Tournament was apparent through their words and expressions.

The Master Teacher Tournament only happened once every decade, and on top of that, the location where it would be hosted was randomly selected each time... Given that it was conducted in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance this time, there was no way they could miss the festival.

In truth, the Master Teacher Tournament also had the intention of utilizing the fanfare behind the tournament to display the might of the master teachers as well as boost the popularity of this occupation and bring new blood into the organization.

"Look, it's Ruohuan gongzi!"

"He's so handsome! The person beside him must be Zhang shi, right?"

"I think so! I became his loyal fan after hearing of his affairs..."

"Me too! Despite forfeiting the final test in the selection round, he was still able to take the top position. There is no one else in Myriad Kingdom Alliance who is capable of such a feat..."

...

Upon the arrival of the trio, someone exclaimed and a wave of cheering sounded from the crowd.

Even though the selection round was conducted within the Master Teacher Hall, perhaps due to how astonishing those feats were, everyone in Myriad Kingdom City swiftly learned of the matter.

A 4-star master teacher who wasn't even in his twenties yet; a person who, through his astounding capabilities, convinced the Physician Guild, Formation Master Guild, Beast Hall, and other supporting occupations to make an exception and allow for the promotion in his ranking; the candidate stood above Ruohuan gongzi and the other geniuses in the selection rounds despite participating in only four of the tests... All

three of these were legendary feats in themselves, and any one of them could easily win one the admiration of the younger generation.

"Zhang shi is so dashing!"

"Dashing? Why does he look like a pervert to me instead?"

"Pervert? Even if he's really a pervert, I'm still willing to marry him and bear his children..."

...

A few young ladies bucked up their courage and shouted loudly. Zhang Xuan's astounding feats previously had captured their hearts.

"Pervert? Bear my children?"

Dark streaks filled Zhang Xuan's face.

What the heck was that?

"Seems like Zhang shi's reputation has exceeded even that of mine!" Pavilion Master Kang chuckled as he stroked his beard.

Just two months ago, there was no one in Myriad Kingdom City, not even him, who had heard of Zhang Xuan. And yet, at this very moment, his name was known in every single household throughout the capital.

The Master Teacher Tournament was indeed capable of inducing a rapid surge in one's reputation.

Right after Zhang Xuan and the rest squeezed through the crowd and gathered together with the group from the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion, a beautiful figure suddenly rushed up to him in agitation.

"You're finally out of seclusion..."

It was the second princess of Myriad Kingdom Alliance, Zhao Feiwu.

Ever since his return from Yin-Yang Lake, Zhang Xuan had been in seclusion. For the

past two months, he had hardly met anyone.

At this moment, Zhao Feiwu was no longer disguised as a male. Instead, she wore a simple dress that brought out her lithe figure. She carried a majestic but warm disposition unique to princesses like her, and from afar, she looked no different from a fairy.

"Un!"

Looking at the young lady before her, Zhang Xuan nodded his head.

It seemed that Zhao Feiwu had been cultivating in the past two months. Vaguely, he could sense that she had reached Fighter 6-dan Pixue realm.

To be able to improve so swiftly in such a short period of time, even though the immense pool of resources from the Alliance Head Residence played a part, she must possess superior talent as well.

"Zhang shi!" Jin Conghai, who was in charge of guarding her, stepped forward and greeted Zhang Xuan.

"Take a seat!"

After trading some pleasantries, the few of them sat down, and soon, from the top of the round stage in the center, an elder could be seen walking over.

"This is 5-star Master Teacher Hong shi; he's in charge of hosting this Master Teacher Tournament!"

Pavilion Master Kang whispered to Zhang Xuan telepathically.

Zhang Xuan shot a glance over to the elder on the stage.

Hong shi had a tall stature, and his hands and legs were extremely long. The aura he exuded seemed to be perfectly aligned with the surroundings, as though there was a giant bridge within his body connecting him to the environment, nourishing his body and soul with spiritual energy.

Transcendent Mortal 6-dan, Cosmos Bridge realm!

One of the basic requirements to becoming a 5-star master teacher was to achieve this level of cultivation.

Cosmos Bridge realm was signified by the presence of an intangible bridge within one's body that aligned one with the world. Even without cultivating consciously, spiritual energy would flow along the bridge to nourish one's body, resulting in a constant rise in one's cultivation.

At such a realm, one's zhenqi and soul would grow at a fearsome pace, and one would truly wield the strength to move mountains and fill oceans.

"To think that he's a formidable figure as well!"

Zhang Xuan had met Hong shi just yesterday, and standing behind Mo Hongyuan, the other party looked no different from a timid quail. Thus, he didn't expect the other party to possess such an impressive cultivation level.

In fact, given his current cultivation realm... even ten of him wouldn't be a match for the other party.

His zhenqi was at Transcendent Mortal realm 3-dan pinnacle whereas his soul was at Transcendent Mortal 4-dan realm pinnacle. In total, his strength added up to 2,600,000 ding, and it wouldn't be a problem even if his opponent was a Consonant Spirit realm intermediate stage cultivator.

But against a Cosmos Bridge realm expert, he wouldn't even be able to retaliate.

Even at primary stage, an expert of that caliber would possess a strength of 4,000,000 ding. Putting aside their deep comprehension and control over the environment, just their immense strength posed a huge threat in itself.

"Everyone!"

Just as Zhang Xuan was harboring such thoughts, Hong shi suddenly stopped in his footsteps and spoke. His voice seemed to harness the roar of the thunders, and it resounded clearly in the surroundings.

The entire square consisting of several ten thousand people immediately fell silent upon hearing his words.

His words were spoken through Impartation of Heaven's Will, thus inducing deference amongst the crowd. No one in the square dared to defy his words.

"I am honored to be invited as the host of the once-in-a-decade Master Teacher Tournament!"

Waving his hands, Hong shi glanced through the crowd.

"I believe everyone should know the rewards for the tournament. In the interest of time, I'll skip the pleasantries and move on straight to the structure of the tournament and the rules behind it!"

Hearing those words, the crowd subconsciously held in the breath, fearing that they might miss a single word.

There were at least several thousand ways to conduct the tests of the Master Teacher Tournament that they knew of, and thus, it was impossible to predict.

Interested, Zhang Xuan's eyes also fell on Hong shi.

He had always been curious how the Master Teacher Tournament could ensure fairness while avoiding harming the camaraderie among fellow master teachers.

"As 4-star master teachers, you have stepped into the ranks of an intermediate master teacher, and there has been a significant rise in your standing. Naturally, this also means a greater responsibility towards enlightening the world, and your capability must be up to par to fulfill that responsibility... Soul Depth, cultivation realm, knowledge impartation, understanding of cultivation, identification of flaws... I believe you have already undergone tests assessing you on those aspects in the selection rounds in your respective empires and sects. As such, it would be meaningless if I were to test you on those aspects as well, and it would be hard to assess your capabilities fully through such too."

Hong shi smiled as he looked at the participants of the tournament.

"But if the participants are not assessed on these, what would they be assessed on?"

Everyone was stunned.

Those were the utmost fundamentals to master teachers, and as such, they were used

as criteria to determine the capability of a master teacher.

If they weren't competing on those aspects in the Master Teacher Tournament, then what would they be competing on?

"Calm down, allow me to finish my words first!"

Seeing the doubt in everyone's eyes, Hong shi continued, "The tournament will consist of two main stages-preliminary selection and dueling round. There'll be four tests in the preliminary selection, and only the participants who clear all four tests will be qualified for the dueling round. Those who fail in any one of the tests... will be eliminated from the tournament!"

"Preliminary selection?"

"Dueling round?"

A grim expression appeared on the faces of the crowd.

They thought that the tournament would be similar to the selection round, where they were assessed on their Soul Depth, cultivation, and such. They didn't expect it to take on such a complicated structure.

"I'm sure everyone should understand what dueling is, so I won't elaborate on it. So, I'll just touch on the preliminary selection."

Hong shi continued, "Since you have been chosen as the representative of your power, you must be amongst the top of the younger generation, and there is a good chance that you might advance to become a 5-star master teacher or even higher one day. However... the higher ranked you are, the harder it is for you to advance. Talent isn't all there is to a master teacher, and strength is just one of the many factors you will need. Temperament, courage, wisdom, and intelligence... These are of utmost importance as well. Only with these can you surpass your peers and reach incredible heights in the future.

"Thus, I've designed four tests relating to each of these for the preliminary selection!"

"Tests to assess temperament, courage, wisdom, and intelligence?"

"How can such qualities be assessed?"

"I've no idea too. But since Hong shi is the one conducting the examination, there's no need to worry about the fairness of the tests!"

"Indeed. With so many master teachers present here, it's impossible for him to be biased. I'm just curious as to how these intangible qualities can be assessed!"

...

After understanding the content for the examination, everyone was shocked.

As master teachers, they had heard of tests on one's ability to impart knowledge and comprehension of a cultivation technique. Never in their lives had they heard of tests on one's temperament, courage, wisdom, and intelligence.

After all, as intangible qualities, they couldn't be quantified and measured directly.

Ignoring the commotion amidst the crowd, Hong shi waved his hands and said, "Alright, participants, proceed up the stage!"

"Let's go up!"

Zhang Xuan and Ruohuan gongzi glanced at one another before standing up and walking up to the stage.

The master teachers from other powers also advanced forward.

They were all geniuses below their thirties, and the four stars on the emblems pinned before their chests reflected their talents and capabilities.

Zhang Xuan scanned the faces of the crowd proceeding up the stage, and with the exception of Luo Xuan and Song Chao, he didn't recognize anyone else.

"The primary requirement for the Master Teacher Tournament is that participants mustn't exceed the age of thirty. At the entrance to the stage, there is a crystal ball. Before coming in, touch the crystal ball, and based on the aura of your soul, it'll reflect your actual age!" Hong shi added.

Zhang Xuan glanced at the entrance of the round stage and saw a crystal ball exuding a warm glow being placed on top of a pedestal by the entrance.

To uphold the integrity behind the Master Teacher Tournament, there were strict checks to prevent any unqualified personnel from participating in the tournament.

This crystal ball could peer deep within one's soul. Just by touching it, it was able to accurately determine one's actual age.

Chapter 576

Ghost Domain Illusory City

Through pills or unique techniques, cultivators could warp their appearances to make them look young. Sometimes, even high-rank master teacher would be unable to see through some of these disguises.

On the other hand, a human's soul was forged at birth, and it would mature with the passing of time. There was no cultivation technique or means that could conceal one's soul age.

Thus, using one's soul to assess one's age was viewed to be the fairest method, and no one voiced any complaints.

Soon, all fifty-six participants had passed the crystal ball test. Most of them were between twenty-eight and twenty-nine, and the oldest of them all was twenty-nine-year-old and eleven months. Naturally, the youngest of the lot was Zhang Xuan.

He was still two months away from reaching twenty, and everyone couldn't help but be shocked upon seeing such a young participant-after all, the others were around a decade older than him.

Considering his age, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that he was the most talented of all those gathered there.

"Why does the Myriad Kingdom Alliance seem to be regressing as time passes?"

"Indeed. To have this child compete with us, it seems like they have given up all hope!"

"They've placed last consecutively so many times. It's no wonder that they have already lost their confidence at this point..."

...

Many people expressed their disdain for the Myriad Kingdom Alliance.

Despite Yang shi driving away fourteen of the strongest powers in the region singlehandedly that day, the entire incident had been hushed, and all news regarding it had been suppressed. As such, most of the spectators and even the participating master teachers were unaware of the matter.

The Myriad Kingdom Alliance had never achieved good results in the past, and upon seeing that they had sent in a lad who was a decade younger than the other participants, naturally, they thought that they had given up on the tournament.

"Since everyone fulfills the requirements, allow me to delve deeper into the details regarding the preliminary selection."

Seeing that everyone had cleared the verification, Hong shi chuckled, "The first round, Temperament!"

At this point, Hong shi waved his hands.

"This is the Ghost Domain Illusory City that was left behind by 5-star Master Teacher Fei Yuzi. This artifact harnesses the concepts of Qi Men Dun Jia, and it is an extremely valuable treasure!"

Hu!

The vision before everyone blurred for an instant as the fog cleared for a corner of the stage, revealing a towering fortress. Red bricks, emerald roof, white walls, and green corridors, from afar, it exuded a sinister aura, sending a cold chill down one's spine.

"Ghost Domain Illusory City?"

"What is that?"

"I seem to remember seeing this in some book before. If I recall correctly, it is a unique treasure harnessing the concepts of Qi Men Dun Jia... As for what exactly it is or how the test will be carried out, I've no idea as well!"

"Qi Men Dun Jia? What's that?"

"It's an extremely rare, unique occupation. I heard that there isn't a single branch even in Huanyu Empire.

...

Seeing a fortress appear amidst the fog, a huge commotion broke out.

Even Pavilion Master Kang and the others couldn't help but frown in doubt.

Despite their vast knowledge, they had never heard of it before.

"There is only one entrance and exit to the Ghost Domain Illusory City. In the Temperament test, you will pass the test as long as you leave via the exit within an incense's time of passing through the entrance!"

Hong shi chuckled as he revealed the rules.

"So simple?"

"But we can only see the entrance. Where is the exit?"

"I've no idea either. However, we should be able to find it after we go in..."

...

Upon hearing the simple rules behind the challenge, everyone was taken aback. Even Zhang Xuan felt a little bewildered.

All of them were 4-star master teachers who possessed superior eyes of discernment. Even if the Ghost Domain Illusory City possessed some kind of Beguilement Formation, it shouldn't be too difficult for them to overcome it.

Since this was the preliminary selection for the Master Teacher Tournament, how could it be that easy?

"Do you think that the test is easy? Let me just tell you in advance, don't bank on luck. It isn't as easy as it seems!"

Noticing everyone's doubtful gazes, Hong shi chuckled. "The Ghost Domain Illusory City only allows one person to be on its premises at any time. Since there are a total of fifty-six people here, an order must be established. Since we've just verified everyone's ages, let's go by age, starting from the youngest... And so, the first to enter shall be Zhang shi!"

Since Zhang Xuan was the youngest, he would have to be the first one to enter under such an order.

In truth, the reason why Hong shi made such an arrangement was to see how capable Yang shi's direct disciple was as well.

"Me?" Zhang Xuan blinked his eyes in bewilderment.

"Un!" Hong shi nodded his heads.

"Allow Zhang shi to go up first? Isn't that a little too reckless?" Beneath the stage, Pavilion Master Kang, Elder Su, and the other elders of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion glanced at one another as their mouths twitched.

"I don't think that it's a good idea..." Elder Wu nodded his head in agreement.

During the selection round back then, he had suffered greatly under Zhang shi's hands. The latter's means were simply way too peculiar! To allow him to go up first, Hong shi... You are being incautious.

"This... Hong shi, why don't I go first? Zhang shi can go after everyone is done!"

Ruohuan gongzi also swiftly came to a realization and stepped forward.

"What are you up to? Hong shi has already said that we'll go by age, are you trying to flout the rules?"

"I advise you to just back out of the tournament. To cower right before a challenge, even if your Myriad Kingdom Alliance cares not for its reputation, please don't demean master teachers as an occupation!"

"Isn't it a little too late to feel fear at this point..."

...

Hearing Ruohuan gongzi's words, the other master teachers in the surroundings sneered coldly.

The first one to enter tended to be at a disadvantage given that he wouldn't have any idea about what he could expect from the test. In their view, Zhang Xuan had cowered

at the last moment and thus, Ruohuan gongzi tried to step forward in his place.

Furthermore, upon thinking of the latter's age and cultivation, their disdain only served to further deepen.

"Don't worry, the test will be fair. It doesn't matter whether you are the first one to enter or the final one to enter. The Qi Men Dun Jia in the Ghost Domain Illusory City is constantly changing, and it won't repeat itself. The encounter of the first challenger will be of no analytical value to the rest!"

Thinking that Zhang shi was worried about this issue, Hong shi chuckled. "Also, the offensive mechanisms in the artifact will automatically come to a halt within an incense's time. Thus, regardless of your cultivation realm, there'll be no threat to your life!"

"Don't worry, I can deal with it..."

Zhang Xuan turned to Ruohuan gongzi and reassured him.

The Ghost Domain Illusory City sounded fearsome, but it did little to faze him.

"You should enter now!" Hearing the lack of fear in Zhang Xuan's voice, a hint of commendation flashed across Hong shi's face as he beckoned the latter in.

"Un!"

Lifting his feet, Zhang Xuan walked into the entrance of the castle.

As Zhang Xuan disappeared into the entrance, a bitter smile slowly formed on Ruohuan gongzi's face. "I don't doubt that you will be able to deal with it, what I fear is that... the Ghost Domain Illusory City won't be able to deal with you..."

After the days he had spent with Zhang Xuan, he had gained a deep understanding of that fellow.

Even though he often looked confused, his incredible means could easily scare a person to death once he made a move.

Putting aside Elder Wu, Elder Bai, and the others who nearly went insane after being tortured physically and mentally from him, just the experience in the Glacier Plain

Court spoke tons about him... They were supposed to cultivate in the Yin-Yang Lake, but before they could even see the Yin-Yang Lake, he had already sapped the seed water dry...

Common sense simply didn't seem to apply to him.

This Ghost Domain Illusory City looked formidable, but Ruohuan gongzi had little doubt that something could go awry given that Zhang Xuan was involved.

"Let's just hope that my thoughts are wrong..."

Grabbing his heart, Ruohuan gongzi thought.

"There's no need to worry. Given Zhang shi's extraordinary strength, he won't be in danger!"

Seeing the awful look on Ruohuan gongzi's face, Song Chao walked over to console.

Failing to meet Zhang Xuan the past few days, he often spent his time at the Master Teacher Pavilion, and at where, he became acquainted with Ruohuan gongzi.

Coming from similar backgrounds and having a common topic from their experiences in being 'wrecked' by Zhang shi, even though they were rivals, they couldn't help but feel a sense of connection to one another.

"Cough cough, I'm not worried that Zhang shi would be in danger but..." Halfway through his words, Ruohuan gongzi abruptly came to a halt. "I hope that I'm just overthinking it!"

"You're not worried that he will be in danger? What do you mean by that? It can't be that you're worried that the Ghost Domain Illusory City will be in danger?"

Before Song Chao could respond, a young man not too far away flung his sleeves and sneered, "What a joke!"

The duo turned around, only to see a young man with thick eyebrows and high nose bridge.

Ruohuan gongzi recognized the other party.

"Frigid Gale Sect's Liao Wuzhi. He is the second in ranking on the list of contenders to watch out for!"

Even though this young man's words were unpleasant to the ear, his capability wasn't to be underestimated.

He was the number one genius of Frigid Gale Sect, the second most popular contender for the champion seat in the Master Teacher Tournament.

Not knowing how to reply, Ruohuan gongzi replied awkwardly, "That... You shouldn't underestimate Zhang shi, he's quite formidable..."

"Formidable?" Liao Wuzhi harrumphed. "It's only because you don't know how fearsome the Ghost Domain Illusory City is!"

"Fearsome?" The duo was taken aback. "Could it be that Brother Liao knows something about it?"

"Of course! I once read an introduction about it in a book!" Tilting up his chin, a hint of pride gleamed in Liao Wuzhi's eyes.

Given how most pavilion masters were unaware of it, he could be considered to be knowledgeable for knowing it.

"The Ghost Domain Illusory City harnesses the concepts of Qi Men Dun Jia, which could be classified into Three Mystics, Eight Gates, and Six Jias. It contains the spirits of Zhifu, Tengshe, Taiyin, Liuhe, Baihu, Xuanhu, Jiudi, and Jiutian. Those who enter its premises would fall into an endless spiral of fear! Those who lack the appropriate temperament will find their mental fortitude breached and lose their confidence!"

With both his hands behind his back, Liao Wuzhi spoke with the composure and confidence reminiscent of a great strategist.

"I've heard of Zhang shi's affairs, and I'm indeed impressed by how he was able to become a 4-star master teacher at such a young age. Just the fact that he was able to defeat you, Ruohuan gongzi, means that he is indeed capable... But in the end, he's still too young. Furthermore, given his smooth-sailing life that lacks experiences of defeat, his mental fortitude must be lacking! This test... will likely be where he will be halted!"

As one of the strongest contender for the champion spot, his analytical ability was

beyond ordinary.

Zhang shi might be young but being chosen as the candidate of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance meant that there was indeed something extraordinary about him. As such, Liao Wuzhi didn't look down on him just because of his age.

But while Zhang shi was indeed a genius, he was still way too young and had yet to mature yet. His weak mental fortitude would be his greatest opening.

This test would be the greatest difficulty he had ever faced.

"If my conjecture proves to be accurate, his mental fortitude will definitely be breached within five to ten minutes!" Liao Wuzhi predicted.

"Five to ten minutes?"

"Un! The Ghost Domain Illusory City is simply too formidable. Based on my calculation, even for me, I'll only be able to hold on for around an incense's time. In terms of that, the timing which Hong shi decided on for the test was indeed precise. It is unlikely that there'll be any participants who can persevere any longer than that! Given Zhang shi's young age, it would already be incredible if he could hold on for five minutes..."

Liao Wuzhi waved his hands proudly, and just as he was about to continue, he suddenly froze. As though he had seen a ghost, his body stiffened, eyes widened, and lips trembled uncontrollably.

"Wh-what... is going on?"

Chapter 577

Can It Be Fixed?

Zhang Xuan pushed open the doors to enter the Illusory City.

Its interior was pitch-black, such that he couldn't even see his outstretched hand.

Taking two steps along the corridor, a sinister wind blew past, bringing an eerie voice to his ear.

Wuwuwuwu!

The voice was drenched with resentment and adoration, sorrow and happiness. It struck right into one's soul, rendering the action of covering one's ears meaningless.

"Is this Soul Beguilement?"

Zhang Xuan frowned.

Mo Hunsheng had once used a similar technique against him back in the soul oracle tomb.

Such techniques allowed the voice to resound within one's soul-it would be useless even if one were to inhibit all six senses.

Lifting his gaze, Zhang Xuan saw countless savage eyes staring at him, threatening to leap out at him at any moment to tear him into shreds.

To face hair-standing sorrowful cries and the threat of impending attacks under such a dark environment...

This was indeed a test on one's temperament. If one's mental fortitude wasn't strong enough, one might just faint on the spot.

Boom!

Just as Zhang Xuan was scanning the surroundings curiously, he suddenly felt a powerful surge of energy gushing out from a corner of the room. It flowed along with the whistling of the wind, heading straight for him.

His eyes immediately narrowed, and he leaped forward. But right after he dodged the attack, he felt another powerful surge of energy heading right for him.

Dodging it with a leap, before Zhang Xuan could land on the floor, he felt yet another attack coming from a different direction.

After dodging seven to eight of such attacks, a droplet of cold sweat dripped from Zhang Xuan's chin. He was starting to panic.

The attacks were becoming more and more frequent. If this went on, it would reach a point where Zhang Xuan would be unable to cope at all, and this might potentially end in severe injuries for him.

Could this test really be that difficult?

"No, something's wrong! I could feel the energy and disturbance in the air from the previous attacks, but I didn't hear any sound of collision between the wall and the surge of energy..."

After avoiding a few more attacks, a thought suddenly struck Zhang Xuan, leaving him stunned for a moment.

He could hear the sharp whistling of the wind due to the barrage of attacks raining down on him, but somehow, the sound of collision when the force struck the wall or ground was absent.

Even if Zhang Xuan dodged the attack, the force should have struck the wall or the ground, leaving behind a deep imprint or at least a mark of some kind... But there wasn't anything like that at all. Could the attacks be an illusion too?

"Eye of Insight!"

Thinking such, Zhang Xuan activated the Eye of Insight.

In an instant, the darkness veiling his vision lightened, allowing him to see the rough outline of the entire room.

The Eye of Insight allows one to peer into the essence of everything. While it was impossible for Zhang Xuan's Eye of Insight to peer through the entire Ghost Domain Illusory City given the powerful might of the artifact, it wasn't too much of a problem for him to just see through the facades contained within the interior of a single room.

And in an instant, he saw that the origin of the piercing wind sound that he heard previously was actually countless spirit beings lingering in the surroundings.

It was impossible to tell whether these spirit beings were originally human, spirit beasts, or simply artificial beings. While they were able to stir up an intense wind through their motion, it was completely harmless to one's physical body.

That was also the reason why the wall and floor remained undamaged.

But still, if Zhang Xuan didn't have the Eye of Insight, he would have never dared to face that powerful, frenzied surge of energy even if someone were to inflate his guts.

"Other competitors might have been helpless before these spirit beings, and it would just be a matter of time before they crumbled before the immense pressure on them. But this won't work on me!"

Upon understanding the origin behind the attacks, Zhang Xuan's lips curled up into a smile.

Unable to see or perceive these spirit beings, the other competitors would indeed be unable to deal with these spirit beings. It would just be a matter of time before the mounting pressure crushed their mental fortitude, snapping their thread of sanity.

But... as a soul oracle, if he were to allow mere spirit beings to get the better of him, it would indeed be embarrassing.

"Draw soul!"

Zhang Xuan's glabella glowed, and a soul bearing semblance to his physical appearance emerged from his body.

Weng!

Zhang Xuan clasped his hands together, and a glow of light flashed across the room. The spirit beings, as though having met their nemesis, quickly fled in fear.

The soul of soul oracles possessed extraordinary soul energy, and not to mention, the cultivation technique which Zhang Xuan practiced was the Heaven's Path Soul Art, granting his soul a mighty aura that ghosts dared not stand up against. It was already a huge benevolence, as well as a gesture of respect to Hong shi, that he didn't consume these spirit beings to nourish his soul.

After chasing away those trouble-making spirit beings, the room fell silent. Returning back to his body, Zhang Xuan stood up to start looking for the exit when a thought suddenly struck him, and a smile slowly surfaced on his face.

"Why do I even need to search around? As long as I determine the flaws behind this artifact, wouldn't I be able to find the exit easily?"

Given that Zhang Xuan was attacked by so many soul beings right after he entered the Ghost Domain Illusory City, who knew what else he might face later on?

It would be too much trouble to go through everything. Since he had the Library of Heaven's Path, he could simply find the flaws behind the Ghost Domain Illusory City and, just like with formations, pause its functioning.

In any case, pausing a formation wouldn't damage it. Its functions could be easily restored after he left, and it wouldn't affect the challengers after him.

With such a thought in mind, Zhang Xuan placed his hand on the floor, and a book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Ghost Domain Illusory City, forged by 5-star Master teacher Fei Yuzi. It harnesses the concepts of Qi Men Dun Jia and contains innumerable spirit beings. It can be used as a test to train one's temperament. Flaws: No.1, the stone pedestal at the center serving as the control center is easily noticeable..."

A detailed explanation on the Ghost Domain Illusory City could be seen on the book.

"The stone pedestal at the center is the control center?"

With the Eye of Insight active, Zhang Xuan proceeded forward and saw a stone pedestal with a height similar to his.

"Isn't this way too conspicuous?"

Seeing that something this important was actually placed so openly in the artifact, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

But soon, he came to a realization.

Often, the most dangerous of location tended to be the safest, and sometimes, placing it at the most conspicuous spot may make one overlook it due to their subconscious mind instinctively acknowledging the impossibility of it.

Besides, the cultivators that enter the Illusory City would have their hands full with dealing with the spirit beings. Even if they were to see the stone pedestal, they wouldn't have the spare energy to think of such things.

"Since this is the control center, will the Ghost Domain Illusory City come to a halt if I were to knock this pedestal aside?"

Having found the core of the Illusory City, Zhang Xuan shut the book. With his Eye of Insight still active, he began assessing the stone pedestal.

He couldn't tell what the stone pedestal was made of, but it was exceptionally hard. Zhang Xuan examined the pedestal carefully from several angles, but he wasn't able to find any mechanism embedded into it.

He tried pushing the pedestal with his hands, but as though connected with the fortress, it didn't budge in the least.

"I don't believe that I can't move it. Heaven's Path Fist Art!"

Frowning, Zhang Xuan gathered all of his strength in his fists, and as though a released arrow, his fists shot toward the stone pedestal.

Peng!

His fist struck the stone pedestal, but there was nothing except for a slight tremor. On the contrary, he felt a stinging pain on his fist.

"What a hard stone..."

Zhang Xuan was astonished.

His strength totaled up to 2,600,000 ding, and complemented with the Heaven's Path Fist Art, even a primary-tier Spirit weapon would be crushed instantly. And yet, not only did this ordinary-looking stone pedestal not budge in the least, his fist even grew red from the impact!

"The stone pedestal must be at least a Spirit intermediate-tier artifact, or perhaps... even higher than that!"

To be able to withstand his attack, this stone pedestal had to be an incredible artifact similar to the Illusory City!

"What should I do now?"

Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella.

He had finally found a way to stop the Ghost Domain Illusory City, but due to his lacking cultivation, he wasn't able to do it. This felt extremely stifling to him.

"Wait. I might not be able to move it, but I can always draw on the help of others!"

After a moment of contemplation, Zhang Xuan's eyes suddenly lit up.

He was incapable of moving it with his current strength, but he could always draw on the strength of others, such as... his clone!

Back then, when he exchanged blows with that fellow, he was crushed completely.

The physical body of his clone was truly powerful beyond words.

"Come out!"

Willing so, Zhang Xuan's clone appeared before him.

He had placed this fellow into his storage ring before heading over here, so summoning him hinged only on a single thought.

Given the shared consciousness between the duo, the clone instantaneously understood the plight Zhang Xuan was in. Thus, Zhang Xuan ordered directly, "Break this stone pedestal to stop the formation."

"Alright!"

The clone tightened his fists and released a punch.

Heaven's Path Fist Art!

Kacha! Kacha!

With a crisp sound, a crack appeared in the stone pedestal before him.

The crack swiftly crept across the entire pedestal, and 'huala!', it crumbled into rubble.

"You... Can't you hold back a little?" Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in rage.

Wasn't this stone pedestal so tough such that even his fist suffered great pain from the backlash of his attack? Why did it... suddenly break just like that?

Didn't it seem like his clone had used too much strength?

"Could it be that... clone's physical body is simply too powerful, such that it induced a suppression effect on the stone pedestal?"

After a moment of bewilderment, Zhang Xuan suddenly came to a realization, and he felt tears threatening to spill from his face.

Due to the Nine Hearts Lotus being a God artifact, even if his clone didn't use too much strength, he could still destroy the stone pedestal easily.

To make an analogy, it was just like putting a diamond against a dagger. While the dagger might be more efficient in a battle, in terms of ability to scratch glass, the diamond would be much more effective.

He was just like the dagger whereas his clone was the diamond. While the latter didn't use too much strength behind his attack, the stone pedestal still crumbled easily. Zhang Xuan only intended to move the stone pedestal, but in the end... he ended up destroying it instead.

Hong long!

Conflicted, Zhang Xuan was just considering what he should do next when the entire

Ghost Domain Illusory City rumbled and started shaking violently.

With its core destroyed, the formation supporting the Illusory City was completely crippled. Thus, the gigantic infrastructure immediately started crumbling.

"Keep!"

Returning his clone to his storage ring, he glanced upward, only to see huge lumps of rock raining down on him. Knowing that it was too late for him to escape, he could only raise his arms to protect his head from the falling rocks.

...

"Given how formidable Yang shi is, his student should have no trouble clearing the Ghost Domain Illusory City!"

Outside, on the round stage, Hong shi had been pacing back and forth worriedly ever since Zhang Xuan walked in.

Yang shi had sent his student here to temper him, not to have him eliminated in the first round.

But thinking deeper into the matter, given how powerful Yang shi was, how could his student be anything simple?

"The Ghost Domain Illusory City might be powerful, but I've already adjusted the difficulty such that at least 85% of the fifty-six challengers would be able to clear it... Zhang shi shouldn't be eliminated here! Now, the only problem is how long it will take for him to clear the challenge!"

There was another benefit to the Ghost Domain Illusory City-it could determine how powerful one's mental fortitude was. The faster one could escape from it, the stronger one's mental fortitude was.

Since there was no need to worry about Zhang shi's elimination, the main problem at hand would be how long he would take to clear the test.

"I would require seven minutes to clear the Illusory City. No matter how strong the mental fortitude of the participants is, they will need at least ten minutes to clear the challenge. Considering Zhang shi's age, it would be an incredible feat if he could clear

the challenge in around thirteen minutes!"

Hong shi calculated internally. Seeing that there was still time, Hong shi was just about to find a place to sit down and wait when the ground beneath him suddenly shook violently.

He anxiously lifted his head to take a look, only to see the humongous Ghost Domain Illusory City rumbling loudly before collapsing inward. After which, a figure with both arms raised above his head, a silhouette reminiscent of a valiant warrior, appeared amidst the cloud of dust. On the 'warrior's' face was a sheepish smile.

The 'warrior' scratched his head apologetically and said, "Hong shi... It seems like I accidentally broke your Ghost Domain Illusory City... Can it be fixed?"

Chapter 578

The Fearsome Otherwordly Demonic Tribe

"Fixed?"

Looking at the remaining rubble of the majestic castle from before, Hong shi's body stiffened, and he nearly fainted on the spot.

If you only broke a face of a wall or a corridor, I might still be able to fix it. But this... How in the world do you expect me to fix this?

Fix your head!

It's just a test. If you can clear it, so be it. If you can't, it's nothing much as well... May I ask how in the world did my Ghost Domain Illusory City offend you for you to hold such a heavy grudge against it?

Besides, how long has it been? Two minutes? Three minutes?

In such a short period of time, even I would be unable to reach the center. How... in the world did you manage to tear it down?

Hong shi's heart nearly stopped then, and he was about to go insane.

"Indeed..."

Contrary to Hong shi's frenzied response, Pavilion Master Kang and the other elders from the Myriad Kingdom Alliance Master Teacher Pavilion slapped their faces, as if they'd known that this would occur.

They knew that something would go awry... but even so, they underestimated the extent to which things could go 'awry' at. This was the Master Teacher Tournament! Under such circumstances, how was the test supposed to proceed?

The Ghost Domain Illusory City was the key to testing the candidates' temperament. Given that it had collapsed, how are the other participants going to be assessed?

To cut off other people's path while walking your own...

Zhang shi, aren't you being a little too competitive!

While they were all speechless, Liao Wuzhi's body also swayed weakly from side to side in shock.

It was just a moment ago that Ruohuan gongzi said that he was worried about the safety of the Ghost Domain Illusory City, and he mocked the other party for being ignorant. But from the looks of it now... it seemed like he was the one being ignorant!

To tear down an entire fortress three minutes after walking in...

You aren't a master teacher but a demolisher, right?

While silence loomed in the surroundings, Zhang Xuan patted the dust off his body and stepped away from the rubble with a helpless expression.

All he wanted to do was to silently halt the formation and walk out normally. Why was such a simple wish so hard to realize?

"Fix... It's impossible to fix it!"

Even though Hong shi's heart was hurting so much that it was dripping blood, and he was about to faint from anger. But he quickly forced himself to calm down and recover.

No matter what, the other party was Yang shi's student. Furthermore, it wasn't an intentional action on the other party's part, so it was best for him to just overlook this matter.

While he still felt it was a huge loss to lose a treasure of the Ghost Domain Illusory City's caliber, given that it was already destroyed, there was no use pondering over it. Thus, he could only swallow his pain and accept his loss.

Just that... Given that the Illusory City was completely wrecked, how were the others supposed to take the test?

The other master teachers also shot glances over.

After a moment of hesitation, Hong shi gritted his teeth and said, "Since the Ghost

Domain Illusory City has been damaged... we'll put aside the Temperament test for the time being and move on to the Courage test!"

Even though having a single test voided in the preliminary round would affect the results, it was still at a level where he could overlook.

"Courage test?"

"How is it going to be carried out?"

Upon hearing the next test, everyone swiftly recovered from their shock, and discussions sounded amidst the crowd.

"I believe everyone should know the reason behind why Kong shi established the Master Teacher Pavilion!" Hong shi said.

A master teacher replied, "To strengthen the human race so as to better fend off the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and other calamities!"

The primary reason as to why Kong shi established the Master Teacher Pavilion was to raise the might of the human race as a whole so as to further its prosperity.

"Indeed. Several ten thousand years ago, the powerful Otherworldly Demonic Tribe committed innumerable atrocities, resulting in grievous sufferings to all lifeforms. In order to save the world, Kong shi established the system of master teachers, and after several ten thousand years of development, we've achieved an unprecedented level of prosperity!"

Hong shi nodded his head as his gaze fell on the crowd. "The Courage test is actually very simple. You just have to fulfill the responsibility of a master teacher and... face an Otherworldly Demon!"

"Otherworldly Demon?"

"Hasn't that race gone extinct already? Could it be that there are still survivors?"

Everyone was taken aback.

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had been expelled by Kong shi several ten thousand years ago, and not a single trace of them remained on the continent. To face an

Otherworldly Demon... What did Hong shi mean?

"The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was indeed expelled several ten thousand years ago. However... there are still a few remnants living on the continent. They disguise themselves as humans and hide amongst our communities!"

Hong shi's eyebrows shot up as he waved his hand.

Hula!

The fog veiling another corner of the round stage cleared, revealing a gigantic stone house.

Even though the stone house was tightly sealed, and its interiors couldn't be seen at all, an intense killing intent emanated from within. It felt as though one would be torn apart just by approaching the stone house.

"What a savage aura. Could it be that... an Otherworldly Demon is currently inside the stone house?"

"I've heard that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe has an extremely brutal nature. They regard humans as nothing more than mere ants, and they slaughter them without any guilt whatsoever... As such, an exceptionally dense killing intent lingers around them. This killing intent made it impossible for an ordinary human to approach them-they would simply faint from fright during the encounter-let alone, kill them!"

"Even across a stone house, the killing intent emanated is already so astounding. How powerful must the Otherworldly Demons really be?"

...

Feeling the aura coming from within the stone house, everyone's faces warped in shock.

Fearsome!

All those who were on the round stage were all 4-star master teacher... Even so, the killing intent emanated from within the stone house was sufficient to render their legs wobbly. How powerful must the Otherworldly Demons be then?

"The Otherworldly Demons are callous and cunning. For their growth, they are willing to even devour their own kind! In their eyes, humans are just lower-tier lifeforms, mere prey for them!"

Hong shi harrumphed. "This fellow here has been hiding in Hongfeng Empire, and he had killed at least several thousand humans there. It took me three years before I managed to capture him.

"Even though I've used the Golden Soul Lock to seal his root bone, making it impossible for him to exert much strength, the killing intent that he had tempered over countless years still remains. He could easily exert immense pressure on one's soul and draw out the deepest fear in one. Putting aside 4-star pinnacle master teachers like you all, even half 5-star master teachers would hesitate to face him directly."

It is similar to a human meeting a tiger; even the latter didn't make a move, the former would still instinctively feel fear, and strength would drain from their body.

This was a matter of courage.

"If one doesn't even have the courage to approach a tiger, how could he possibly ever kill one? If a master teacher doesn't dare to approach an Otherworldly Demon, then no matter how far he advances as a master teacher, it would be for naught!

"The Courage test is simple. You just have approach him, and your courage will be judged by how far you close you get to him. The requirement for clearing this test is 5 meters; those who fail to meet this requirement will be eliminated."

Waving his hands, Hong shi flicked his finger.

Huala!

The walls of the stone house immediately burst apart, and a three-meter tall savage-looking beast appeared before everyone.

Honglong!

As soon as the beast came into view, a violent aura abruptly diffused into the surroundings. Some of the audience seated closer to the round stage suddenly felt an intense vertigo striking their mind, and their vision went dark-they had instinctively fainted out of fright.

The master teachers on the stage weren't doing much better either. Song Chao and the other master teachers' faces turned pale, and their lips took on a shade of purple.

In the past, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had enslaved humans, and if not for Kong shi creating the Master Teacher Pavilion and eventually expelling them from the Master Teacher Continent, the entire continent would still be subjected to their tyranny.

Perhaps such primal fear had been deeply imprinted into human instincts, but very few were able to withstand the blow to their soul from the sight of an Otherworldly Demon.

"This is an Otherworldly Demon?"

Zhang Xuan's eyebrows twitched.

The fellow before him looked like a gigantic savage beast. Bloodthirst seemed to exude from every single inch of its body, inducing the feeling that one would be torn to shreds if one were to try to approach it.

Putting aside the other master teachers, even Zhang Xuan found it difficult to approach the Otherworldly Demon within a 5-meter radius.

"Fearsome!"

It was no wonder the Master Teacher Pavilion dared not let down their guard despite several ten thousand years having passed since the disappearance of the Otherworldly Demons. They were indeed worthy of such wariness from the Master Teacher Pavilion.

"He is bound and unable to move, so you need not worry of being harmed. The time limit is half an incense's time, and those who are unable to get within 5 meters of him will be eliminated!"

After which, Hong shi lit an incense and waved his hands. "The time starts now!"

Hearing that the test had started, the crowd on top of the round stage began advancing toward the beast with a grave look on their faces.

Zhang Xuan followed behind them as well, but with just a single step, his face abruptly lost all color.

Just this single step had subjected him to twofold the pressure from before. The savage killing intent lingering in the air stripped his legs of its strength, rendering him unable to proceed further.

He glanced at the others around him, and they didn't seem to be in a much better condition than him. Sweat covered their foreheads, and their faces were as pale as a sheet of paper.

Forcefully taking another step forward, the pressure intensified yet again. It was as if he was a lone boat standing before a huge storm; powerful waves rushed at him, threatening to sink him at any moment. At the same time, it was as if he was standing right at the edge of a cliff; a single step forward would mean plummeting into Avīci and subjected to an eternity of suffering.

'Under such circumstances... even ten meters would be difficult, not to mention, five meters!'

Initially, Zhang Xuan thought that this test would be a walk in the park, but it turned out to be tougher than he had expected.

It seemed that with his willpower itself, it would be impossible for him to pass this step.

Advancing another step forward, only ten competitors remained alongside him.

'Let me try driving my zhenqi!'

Taking yet another step forward, Zhang Xuan felt as though he was coming to the limit of his endurance. Thus, he decided to drive his zhenqi.

He didn't use his zhenqi to ward off the killing intent beforehand so as to test his own limits. But regrettably, four steps seemed to be it. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't take a single inch forward.

Hu!

As the Heaven's Path zhenqi flowed through his body, the pressure weighing down on him immediately disappeared, and the tenseness he felt faded.

That energy that threatened to rip him apart a moment ago felt nothing more than a

gentle breeze on him at this moment.

'As I expected, the Heaven's Path zhenqi is indeed capable of neutralizing killing intent!'

The Heaven's Path zhenqi possessed no attribute whatsoever, but this allowed it to neutralize all types of attributes of all types. Zhang Xuan had previously guessed that driving the Heaven's Path zhenqi would neutralize the killing intent from the Otherworldly Demons, and fortunately, it seemed like he was spot-on.

He secretly peeked at the others

Different from him, the others had been driving their zhenqi right from their start, but that did little to alleviate their pale complexion.

But even so, with their sheer determination, those at the front were already approaching the 10-meter mark.

'Incredible!'

Seeing how they were able to proceed so far despite being unable to neutralize the killing intent effectively with their zhenqi, a hint of respect appeared on Zhang Xuan's face.

It was no wonder they were known as geniuses, and why Pavilion Master Kang didn't think well of them. They did possess the qualities worthy of their evaluation.

If not for Zhang Xuan 'cheating' through his Heaven's Path zhenqi, it was hard to tell whether he could have traveled further than them.

Relieved on the immense pressure on him, Zhang Xuan's thoughts gradually grew lively.

'Could the immense pressure exerted by the Otherworldly Demon... be considered as a battle technique as well?'

Given how everyone was so frightened such that it was difficult for them to approach the Otherworldly Demon, the latter was clearly utilizing some kind of ability to exert pressure on one's soul.

Even if this ability couldn't be considered as a battle technique, it should be close to one. Given so, is it possible for the Library of Heaven's Path to peer into the flaws of the Otherworldly Demon?

'Flaws!' Zhang Xuan willed.

Hu!

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Chapter 579

Zhang Xuan in a Daze

He was only trying his luck, but to his delight, it actually worked. Excited, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up, and he hurriedly flipped through its contents.

"The offspring of an otherworldly lifeform and spirit beast. Born in Wangyuan Mountain of Hongfeng Empire. Cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 5-dan Consonant Spirit realm... Flaws:..."

'He isn't a purebred Otherworldly Demon but... a progeny with a spirit beast?'

Zhang Xuan blinked his eyes.

To think that this fellow, who was powerful enough to halt the advancement of a 4-star master teacher with its disposition in itself... was just a hybrid! If that was the case... how powerful must a purebred be?

Not to mention, to actually breed with a spirit beast... The tastes of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe sure was heavy!

The thought of satisfying one's physical needs with that gigantic and swollen body of a spirit beast... Zhang Xuan couldn't help but shiver in disgust.

'But even so, this fellow is indeed strong!'

Based on the information in the book, the other party's physical body and soul were extremely powerful, such that it would be able to easily rival master teachers of the similar cultivation realm-or rather, master teachers who hadn't been through special training to cope with its overwhelming killing intent wouldn't be able to even get close to it.

It was no wonder the Master Teacher Pavilion was so fearful of the Otherworldly Demon Tribe. There was a clear and huge difference in the innate talent between humans and the Otherworldly Demon Tribe.

"My Heaven's Path zhenqi doesn't fear the pressure he exerts. I'll just approach a 5-meter radius around him and remain there for a moment!"

Zhang Xuan had just destroyed Hong shi's Ghost Domain Illusory City, thus putting him at the tip of others' tongues. Even though he could clear this test easily, he felt that he shouldn't cause too much of a fuss this time round.

In any case, it was just the preliminary selections and there was no ranking for this. It would suffice as long as he passed the test, there was no need for him to show off.

Thinking so, Zhang Xuan lifted his gaze to look at the others in the surroundings.

In the time that he spent browsing through the book, the others had already gotten ahead of him. There were quite a few who were in proximity to the huge beast already, just a few steps away to reaching the 5-meter mark.

Even though their movements looked very strained, their ability to get to such proximity reflected their courage and determination.

It was no wonder why they were the representatives of their respective powers, they did possess extraordinary mental fortitude and talent.

"That Luo Xuan is leading the group..."

Walking at the forefront was Luo Xuan from Fleeting Cloud Sect. He was listed to be the number one contender for the champion placing in the book Pavilion Master Kang showed him, and it did seem to be very plausible at this moment.

As long as one were to get into a 5-meter radius of the Otherworldly Demon, one would be considered to have passed the test.

As for Song Chao, he was in the middle of the entire group. On the other hand, Ruohuan gongzi exceeded Zhang Xuan's expectations. Surprisingly, he was amongst the group at the front.

"Should I go over now, or should I wait a little longer? Forget it, I'm in no hurry anyway. I should first look through that fellow's flaws first!"

Seeing that no one had reached the 5-meter mark yet, Zhang Xuan decided to continue reading the book first.

There were many flaws detailed on the hybrid Otherworldly Demon in the book in the Library of Heaven's Path, so it was taking Zhang Xuan a little longer to finish reading through it. In any case, he didn't want to catch too much attention by being the first to clear the test anyway. Thus, he decided to wait a little longer.

...

Beneath the stage.

"Ruohuan seems to be faring well. To think that he would achieve such outstanding results right from the start!" Elder Su stroked his beard as he said.

"Indeed. The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe sure is fearsome, I don't think that I could achieve his current results even if I were to head up!" Ling shi sighed.

It was their first time meeting an Otherworldly Demon as well. They were already feeling stifled from the intense killing intent even though they were beneath the stage. It was difficult for them to imagine the pressure that was weighing down on the competitors at the moment.

"It seems like the advice I told him worked after all!" Hearing the compliments of his two friends, Pavilion Master Kang smiled.

"Oh? What did you tell him to motivate him so much as to rush straight into the top few placing?" Su shi and Ling shi asked curiously.

They couldn't imagine any advice that could induce such a huge change in one.

Even though Ruohuan gongzi did improve greatly in the past two months, he was still a distance away from matching up to the top geniuses from the other sects and empires.

"I told him that there's nothing he has to be worried about, and he should just give it his all. After all, is there anything in this world that is more fearsome than Zhang shi? Since he doesn't even fear Zhang shi, why should he hesitate over anything?" Pavilion Master Kang stroked his beard.

"Cough cough..."

Su shi and Ling shi staggered. They were rendered speechless by the words of their

old friend.

But giving it some thoughts, while these words were indeed a little peculiar, it was indeed good advice.

A fellow who could collapse even the Ghost Domain Illusory City in two to three minutes-if Ruohuan gongzi didn't even fear such a monster, what did he have to fear from the other geniuses out there?

Just that... To use Zhang shi to suppress the fear toward Otherworldly Demons... Why does it feel as though something is wrong?

After a moment of speechlessness, Su shi suddenly frowned and said, "Right, why isn't Zhang shi moving? Could he be at his limit?"

Zhang shi proceeded rather swiftly initially, but after advancing four steps, he abruptly came to a stop and hadn't moved since. It had been several minutes since then. Could it be that he was unable to withstand the pressure from the Otherworldly Demon?

"Even though he possesses astounding capability, he's still much too young. It's his first time meeting an Otherworldly Demon, and it's unavoidable that he would freeze in fear..." Ling shi shook his head.

"I don't know what's going on either. Actually, I thought of the same thing too, but what I'm more worried about is that..."

Pavilion Master Kang shook his head, "...he might cause something huge once more!"

"Cause something huge? I think it's unlikely for that to happen. Given the strength of the Otherworldly Demon, even you and I wouldn't be a match for it, and he's currently only at Transcendent Mortal 3-dan pinnacle... Besides, the goal of the test is just to approach the Otherworldly Demon. How could any problem occur from this?"

Su shi shook his head. "There's no need for you to worry about this!"

"I hope so..."

Pavilion Master Kang nodded, and just as he was about to speak, he suddenly froze. Then, lifting a finger up to the stage, he exclaimed, "How can that be?"

Hearing the anxiousness in the latter's voice, Su shi and Ling shi hurriedly turned their gazes over, and their eyes narrowed uncontrollably.

As Luo Xuan and the others stepped into a 5-meter mark, the Otherworldly Demon, who had his eyes shut all along, opened abruptly, and a sinister light gleamed in his blood-red eyes.

"To dare use me as a test of courage, you are courting death!"

A voice boomed as though thunder, rattling everyone's soul. The immense body of the Otherworldly Demon shook, and in an instant, everyone abruptly felt as though they were plunged into a storm.

"Ah..."

The few master teachers standing at the very front cried out in agony simultaneously. Their bodies lost all strength and they fell helplessly to the ground from fright.

Luo Xuan wasn't spared either. His body stiffened, and he looked as though his soul had escaped from his body.

"You lowly creatures, how dare you capture and use me! I'll devour every single one of you..."

Roaring furiously, the Otherworldly Demon's glaring red lips parted, revealing rows after rows of sharp teeth. The sight of it left goosebumps rising through one's body, inducing a sensation as though one would be torn to shreds just by approaching him.

"AHH... I'M NOT GOING TO COMPETE ANYMORE..."

Before the Otherworldly Demon could finish his words, a pale-faced master teacher abruptly screamed as he scrambled off the stage.

A pool of pungent fluid was left in his wake.

With a precedent, the second and the third soon emerged.

For 4-star master teacher geniuses to actually be reduced to such a state! The crowd below fell completely silent. But even so, no one thought that they were cowardly.

After all... none of them could say that they would do better when put in such a position as well.

The Otherworldly Demon was already fearsome when it was idle; now that it was roaring and baring its fangs, it would be wonder if the others could hold on.

"To think that even trash lifeforms like you all would be able to rule over the continent, the world sure has regressed!"

Seeing some of the participating master teachers escape and the rest collapsed on the floor, the Otherworldly Demon sneered. Just as he was going to drive all of them away in a single breath, he saw a young man standing quietly at a distance away, seemingly...

...in a daze!

In a daze?

Aren't all of you here to test your courage? What the heck are you dazing off for?

Besides, I've been roaring here and there, and I even intensified the killing aura to the maximum. Even a half 5-star master teacher would find it hard to withstand the pressure. And yet, a little fellow like you is actually unfazed?

With a livid expression, the Otherworldly Demon focused all of its killing intent on the young man and roared.

"Little fellow, do you think you are courageous? Let's see how courageous you can be after you're dead..."

Hualala!

The voice, tinged with overpowering killing intent, swept across the entire stage as though a hurricane. It was so strong that a 4-star master teacher beneath the stage even fell off his seat and fainted.

All of the 4-star master teachers collapsed on the ground huddled their bodies together in fear, not daring to even breathe loudly.

But...

The young man whom he focused all of his killing intent on was still standing silently on the spot with all of his attention devoted to... dazing off!

It seemed as though the other party didn't even notice his attack!

"I'll kill you!"

Not expecting that he, despite being a proud Otherworldly Demon, would actually be disregarded by such a young master teacher, his rage was unleashed.

Back then, Hong shi had to deploy more than seventy master teachers before he was able to capture him.

And in that battle, he had managed to slay at least twenty of them and severely injured another thirty. Even Hong shi, a 5-star master teacher, was afraid of him. And yet, a 4-star primary master teacher actually dared to disregard him?

This was too much!

Boom!

An even more powerful aura gushed into the surroundings, and upon feeling the killing intent infused into the aura, even Hong shi's face paled. Yet, the young man before him continued on in his daze.

It was as if nothing mattered before him. Neither the pressure nor the killing intent he exerted was able to faze the young man at all.

"This... I knew that Zhang shi would surely stir something up, but still... to think that it really happened!"

The faces of Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and the other elders paled as they trembled uncontrollably.

Naturally, the young man was Zhang Xuan.

Despite the odds, they thought that something would happen since Zhang shi was involved. And as though not to let down their expectations, something did indeed happen.

The other party was an Otherworldly Demon, even they themselves found it hard to cope with that overpowering killing intent. Yet, even though the bulk of the other party's killing intent was focused on you, you are actually dazing off... Could you at least give a reaction, even if it's only out of respect for your opponent? To be dazing away on a battlefield like this, what in the world are you up to?

"It can't be that... Zhang shi has fainted from fear?"

"Fainted? If he has fainted, how can he still be standing? Furthermore, he was still looking around a moment ago..."

"But if he is still conscious, what can he be doing? The Otherworldly Demon is exerting so much pressure that he is about to spew blood, how can there be no reaction on Zhang shi's part at all?"

"This... I have no idea as well!"

They weren't the only ones who noticed that something was amiss. The other master teachers and the crowd beneath also noticed the peculiarity, and they were staring at one another in bewilderment, confused over the situation unfolding before them.

The Otherworldly Demon, with its innate ability to instill fear into a soul, left all of the competitors paralyzed on the floor, not daring to even utter a word.

And yet, despite focusing its attention on Zhang shi, roaring relentlessly and baring its fangs... the latter remained completely impassive...

Big Brother, do you really not fear the Otherworldly Demon, or are you dead already?

Chapter 580

Kill Yourself!

Just as everyone had seen, the Otherworldly Demon was truly on the verge of falling into a frenzy.

Even if you don't fear, you need not make it so obvious, do you?

I'm already putting in all my effort into it. Even if just to acknowledge my effort, you should at least give a reaction!

Look at how everyone above and beneath the stage has collapsed on the ground, you are the only one standing there, unfazed, at this point... Aren't you being a little too disrespectful to me, your opponent?

"I'll kill you..."

The more he thought about it, the angrier he became. Roaring once more, the tall Otherworldly Demon gritted his teeth and a mouthful of blood spewed from his mouth. His eyes grew even redder, and the callous aura shrouding him intensified.

"This is bad! The Otherworldly Demon is activating Blood Berserk!"

"Blood Berserk?"

"Indeed. On top of their powerful physical bodies and souls, the Otherworldly Demon are also capable of burning their blood essence in exchange for raising their fighting prowess temporarily. I've read the 'History of the War Against the Otherworldly Demons' written by Master Teacher Zheng Xiao, and it states that many master teachers have died under such attacks."

"Then what should we do?"

"I don't know either. However... since Hong shi has sealed his root bone with the Golden Soul Lock, he shouldn't be able to exert any strength!"

...

Seeing the huge fellow going into a rampage, a look of worry appeared on the faces of the knowing master teachers below the stage.

An Otherworldly Demon in his normal state was already sufficiently frightening, how fearsome would he be once he went into a berserk state?

Hong shi grasped a weapon tightly in his hands. As soon as that fellow made a move, he would slaughter the other party without any hesitation.

But even so... at the current moment, he was still confident in the ability of the Golden Soul Lock in sealing the Otherworldly Demon's movements. As long as the Otherworldly Demon was unable to break out of his restraints, it shouldn't be a problem at all. After all, the main point of this test was to assess the courage of the participants. As such, there was no need for him to make a move as long as there was no threat to the participant's life.

Besides, it took him a lot of effort to capture this Otherworldly Demon alive. He was hoping to take him to the headquarters to claim his reward. If he were to kill him, he wouldn't be able to claim any reward at all.

Hong long!

Amidst everyone's frightened gaze, the Otherworldly Demon finally activated Blood Berserk fully and roared at Zhang Xuan.

"Die..."

The killing intent and the pressure harnessed within the roar seemed as though thunder booming from the highest heaven. 'Jiya', the round stage creaked, seemingly unable to withstand the pressure.

All of the master teachers and cultivators around the young man trembled uncontrollably in fear, not daring to move in the slightest.

And yet... Zhang Xuan still remained in his daze, completely indifferent to the other party's offense.

"You..."

The Otherworldly Demon was about to explode in rage. After struggling for a moment, fresh blood spurted from his mouth once more. Stepping forcefully against the ground, he advanced forward.

Even though he was incapable of fighting due to his root bone being sealed by the Golden Soul Lock, he was still able to move around. The only reason why he'd remained stationary previously was in fear that Hong shi would kill him. But panicked and enraged, he couldn't care as much anymore.

"I'll kill you..."

Huala!

With his gigantic head at a distance less than fifty meters before Zhang Xuan, it roared furiously.

Even at such a far distance away, the immense pressure the Otherworldly Demon exerted could leave countless trembling helplessly in fear. At such a close proximity, it would surely feel as though one was already in death's embrace, leaving one completely terror-stricken and hysterical.

And yet... Zhang Xuan remained completely motionless, still in his daze.

"Zhang shi..."

Hong shi couldn't stand looking at it anymore.

What the heck are you doing?

Even if you are dazing off, isn't this going a bit too far?

"Ah?"

Hearing someone shout his name, Zhang Xuan finally returned to his senses.

The introduction and the flaws concerning the Otherworldly Demon was simply too long and too shocking. Despite the vast knowledge Zhang Xuan had gathered through the books he had read before, he still found himself astonished by its contents, thus resulting in his attention being completely absorbed in the book.

As for the other party's roaring... Zhang Xuan thought that the fellow was simply trying to scare some other participant, and as such, he didn't pay it much heed.

As soon as he drew his consciousness out from the book, he suddenly saw a hideous face right before him. Alarmed, he sent a slap right at the other party.

Pah!

A crisp sound echoed across the round stage.

Everyone was dumbfounded.

The Otherworldly Demon's eyes also widened in frenzy.

In order to exert further pressure on the other party's soul, he burned his blood essence to intensify his killing intent. He even went to the extent of laboriously making his way here just so to teach this arrogant brat a lesson... And yet, not only did the other party remain completely unfazed, the other party even slapped him!

"You lowly human, die!"

With his mind clouded with wrath, the Otherworldly Demon couldn't care less about the Golden Soul Lock any longer. He raised his immense fist and sent it right toward the young man before him.

Hu hu!

A piercing wind screamed in the surroundings.

With his root bone sealed, the Otherworldly Demon could only tap into the strength of his physical body. But even so, blessed with strong innate physique, his physical strength wasn't one that a Transcendent Mortal 3-dan cultivator could withstand.

"You beast, you're seeking death..."

Seeing how the Otherworldly Demon actually dared to make a move, Hong shi's eyebrows shot up. Raising his sword, he prepared to make a move. But before he could do anything, Zhang Xuan leaped to the side, dodging the attack. Then, with a displeased look on his face, he glared at the Otherworldly Demon.

"Audacious! Who are you calling lowly?"

Flinging his sleeves, Zhang Xuan stood upright. His master teacher robe danced along with the slight tug of the wind, creating an impression of an incredible expert.

"As an offspring of an Otherworldly Demon and a Dustshell Beast, your blood is impure and your energy is adulterated. Not to mention, the technique you used to exert pressure on others' soul is filled with flaws. Given how you can't even deal with an ordinary human like me, what rights do you have to say that humans are lowly?"

"You..."

Not expecting the person before him to identify his origins, the Otherworldly Demon was stunned. For a moment, he forgot his rage against the other party.

"What? Is there anything wrong about what I said?"

With his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan slowly walked up to the Otherworldly Demon. "It's one thing for your blood to be adulterated, but you didn't even receive the heritage that an Otherworldly Demon should possess at birth. To grow stronger, you had to study the human language and practice human cultivation techniques. And yet, you dare to say that humans are lowly? What gave you the confidence to utter such words?"

"I..." The Otherworldly Demon subconsciously took a step back in fear.

"Wh-what... is going on?"

Seeing how Zhang shi, who was still dazing off a moment ago, lecturing the Otherworldly Demon as soon as he came to again, the crowd stared at one another as though they had seen a ghost.

Even Hong shi was bewildered by the situation as well... This fellow actually wasn't a pure-blooded Otherworldly Demon?

Given how he, despite being the one who captured the Otherworldly Demon, didn't notice it, how did Zhang shi know about it? And how could he have known that the other half of the other party's blood came from the Dustshell Beast?

More importantly... Despite being a 5-star master teacher, he was unaware of the

heritage of Otherworldly Demons. And yet, this fellow actually knew about it... Could Yang shi have taught him that?

It wouldn't be surprising for an 8-star master teacher like Yang shi to know of such deep secrets of the Otherworldly Demons. Despite reaching 5-star, Hong shi had yet to advance to even higher Master Teacher Pavilions, and as such, he didn't know much about such matters.

"You were born in a village on Wangyuan Mountain of Hongfeng Empire, and you were adopted and raised by humans. Before twenty, other than your large head, you were no different from a human, and you didn't know about your unique heritage either. Yet, in a minor dispute with a villager, you killed the latter. And when the parents who raised you questioned you about the matter, out of rage, you awakened your bloodline as an Otherworldly Demon and killed them as well!"

Zhang Xuan glanced at the Otherworldly Demon. "Am I right?"

"..." The Otherworldly Demon trembled in fear.

He was indeed raised by humans. It was a poor village, and the villagers there led a simple life. Perhaps it was due to this that they possessed an innocence contrary to the depravity existent in cities.

Even though he had a huge appetite from young due to his larger stature, his parents treated him kindly. No matter how poor they were, they never allowed him to starve.

There was once when it snowed five days consecutively, and the house ran out of food. Bearing the risk of a snowstorm, his parents went out to hunt, only to come back grievously injured with an ordinary hare in hand and several wild vegetables. The rabbit wasn't large, and it wasn't sufficient to go around the family.

In order to not let him starve, the entire rabbit went to him while his parents ate only the plucked wild vegetable.

Just the thought of it evoked sympathy for his parents.

"Even though they were your foster parents, they still doted on you as though you were their real child. But how did you repay them? After awakening your bloodline, you slew the entire village, including your buddies, parents, and kin... and you devoured them all!"

With a livid expression and sharp eyes, Zhang Xuan pushed on. "Not only so, you even torched the entire village into ashes... Let me ask you, have you ever felt the slightest regret for your actions?"

The Otherworldly Demon trembled once more.

Even though he had inherited the brutal nature of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, he still grew up amongst humans, and he was taught etiquette and shame. These past memories poked at him as though a thorn in his heart, agitating him constantly, leaving him ashamed.

"Regret? I did regret my actions, but so what? Th-they were the ones who humiliated me! They said that I looked inhumane and that I was a beast. That's why I killed them all! Was I wrong in exacting my vengeance?" The Otherworldly Demon roared through gritted teeth.

"You don't think you have done wrong? Alright then. After killing your foster parents and torching the village, to fill your stomach, you headed to the closest Yang City. Due to your tall stature and sturdy build, you were recruited to become a bodyguard for a wealthy family. Your employers provided you with decent food, lodging, and even imparted a cultivation technique to you. And yet, how did you repay them?"

With an icy-cold voice, Zhang Xuan continued, "Out of lust for the young mistress of the family, you raped and killed her. And out of fear that your employer would exact vengeance on you upon learning of the matter, you killed his entire clan of seventy-eight people. It's a pity that that old man still believed in you even when your sword was placed right on his throat! Regarding this... there's no mistake in my words, right?"

There were many flaws in the soul attacks from the Otherworldly Demon, and it originated from these doubts he harbored in his mind.

It was due to the conflict and regret he felt that his temperament slowly declined, resulting in his inability to unleash his full strength.

Otherwise, given how fearsome the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was, it wouldn't be possible for Hong shi and the other master teachers to capture a mature Otherworldly Demon so easily.

"I..."

The Otherworldly Demon trembled yet again.

"When the Master Teacher Pavilion sent men after you, you slew more than twenty master teacher, and even when you were captured by Hong shi, you still refused to repent. You attempted to escape and recuperate by killing others to absorb their strength... A bastard like you who is neither a human, a beast, nor an Otherworldly Demon actually dares to claim that humans are lowly. Let me direct the same question to you once more, what right do you have to say that humans are lowly?"

Before the other party could speak, Zhang Xuan pushed further on.

His voice carried immense authority that weighed down the Otherworldly Demon's soul.

"Despite being an Otherworldly Demon, you failed to be acknowledged by your tribe; living in the human world, you ended up killing your kin and friends, thus becoming a scorn of humanity. What right do you have to continue existing on the face of this world?"

Flinging his sleeves, Zhang Xuan spoke with a compelling strength in his voice, "Kill yourself!"

The Otherworldly Demon's body trembled, and his eyes turned into blank voids. "Indeed, what right do I have to continue existing on the face of this world?"

Pah!

Lifting his palm, he struck his forehead. His gigantic body swayed and collapsed lifelessly to the floor.

Chapter 581

The Test Is on Reading Books?

"He committed suicide?"

"Zhang shi actually convinced... the Otherworldly Demon to commit suicide?"

...

The crowd went completely silent.

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was known for being terrifying!

And the one before them was a Consonant Spirit realm expert! Except for Hong shi, there was no one else present who was a match for him. And yet, the other party... was actually convinced by Zhang shi to commit suicide...

Did it have to be so fantastical?

Could it be that we're dreaming?

"It's... Impartation of Heaven's Will!"

"Isn't it an ability that only could be executed in the midst of a lesson?"

"As long the content of one's words are logical and without flaws, one can infuse one's Soul Depth into one's words to beguile another to do things they might have never done! It seemed like what Zhang shi said previously was correct, and through such, he managed to agitate the Otherworldly Demon to a corner and force him to commit suicide!"

"Impartation of Heaven's Will can actually convince a person to commit suicide? Doesn't that mean that... master teachers can easily kill one as long as they can find something true to speak about?"

"It's not that easy. Not only must the matter be true, it must also be aligned with the

internal thoughts of the person in question for it to be effective. Take cultivation for example, the main reason why Impartation of Heaven's Will is effective on the cultivation of most cultivators is due to their subconscious minds acknowledging the need to cultivate, and thus, they would instinctively accept the effects of Impartation of Heaven's Will! Even though this Otherworldly Demon possessed a savage nature, he was still raised by humans, and inculcated within him are our values. The guilt he felt over his actions was the main reason why Zhang Shi was able to persuade him to commit suicide!"

"I see..."

"However, to be able to beguile a Consonant Spirit realm Otherworldly Demon, even the Soul Depth of a 4-star pinnacle master teacher would be insufficient... Exactly how high is Zhang Shi's Soul Depth? 15.0? 16.0?"

...

A moment later, the crowd below also learnt of the ins and outs of the matter, and a commotion broke out.

It was clear that the reason why the Otherworldly Demon committed suicide was due to the effects of Impartation of Heaven's Will.

But... the Soul Depth of a 4-star master teacher would only allow one to beguile a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan expert. A 5-dan expert would require an even higher Soul Depth.

Not to mention, the Otherworldly Demon before them possessed an extraordinarily powerful soul. Even so, he was still beguiled. Since that was the case... exactly how high was Zhang Shi's Soul Depth then?

This was way too fearsome!

"He was actually killed... by words?"

The sight before them sent tears flowing down Pavilion Master Kang and the other master teachers faces.

They thought that Zhang Shi's daze was stirring up trouble in itself, but it seemed like they were underestimating the latter.

Of the two tests that had been conducted, he wrecked the both of them entirely...

If they didn't know better, they would have thought his primary motive here was to stir trouble...

...

Beneath the stage, Ruohuan gongzi, Luo Xuan, and the others were rendered speechless.

They had witnessed how fearsome that huge fellow was for themselves, and they knew that they would have never been able to stand their ground against such frightening killing intent. And yet, not only was Zhang Shi fine, he even convinced the latter to commit suicide...

Are you sure that this fellow is truly ten years younger than us?

Could he be a 6-star or 7-star master teacher in disguise?

The mouth of Liao Wuzhi, who was looking down on Zhang Xuan just a moment ago, twitched in fright, and he didn't dare to utter a single more word.

...

Disregarding the thoughts of the crowd, Zhang Xuan glanced at the massive carcass on the ground and heaved a sigh of relief.

The reason why he had been 'dazing off' previously was due to the immense shock he felt from reading the vile deeds this fellow had committed. He was already enraged from reading those events, and upon seeing how that fellow knew no repent, even going to the extent of insulting humanity as a whole, he couldn't hold back his rage any longer and utilized the Impartation of Heaven's Will to kill the other party!

His current Soul Depth had reached 16.1, which was at the level of most 5-star master teacher. Even so, it still wasn't easy for him to beguile an Otherworldly Demon to commit suicide, and it had exhausted him greatly. If not for a strong will driving him on, he might have collapsed then.

(Zhang Xuan possessed 0.1 Soul Depth at the very start. The usage of two golden pages increased by Soul Depth by 10.0, the Soul Tempering of a Mentor's Calligraphy 1.0,

two occasions of acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher 3.0, Soul Enlightenment 2.0, thus adding up to a total of 16.1)

But it was fortunate that he succeeded.

Taking a deep breath, he conditioned the internal state of his body. After which, he turned around to look at Hong shi, only to see the latter's mouth twitching uncontrollably.

The current Hong shi was indeed on the verge of a mental breakdown.

That Ghost Domain Illusory City was already his entire fortune. After it was destroyed, he was banking on bringing this Otherworldly Demon to the headquarters and submit it to recoup his losses. And yet...

In the blink of an eye, the Otherworldly Demon was convinced to commit suicide!

Big Brother, are you trying to drive me into a corner as well?

Are you here to participate in the Master Teacher Tournament or are you here to cause trouble?

Besides... We're only halfway through the Courage test, how am I supposed to continue on with the test under such circumstances?

It was one thing for the first test to end like this, but for the second test to be like that as well... Are you actually trying to annul the Master Teacher Tournament?

Just as Hong shi was considering whether he should kick that fellow out of the Master Teacher Tournament, the latter's voice sounded.

"Hong shi, what do I do with the carcass?"

"Otherworldly Demons are callous in nature, killing one of them can be considered to be a meritorious contribution to society. You don't have to worry about the carcass, someone will clear it later on!"

Even though Hong shi's heart was bleeding, he could only force a smile on and reply in such a manner.

Anyway, there was nothing he could do anymore. The Otherworldly Demon was already dead, and there was no point pursuing the matter. On the contrary, it would only make the master teachers think that he was siding with the Otherworldly Demons.

"With the death of the Otherworldly Demon, the Courage test is unable to proceed on as planned. So, with the exception of the trio who escaped earlier, all remaining fifty-three master teachers on the stage shall proceed on to the next test!"

Knowing that there was no point feeling conflicted over this, Hong shi forced a smile on his face and proceeded on with the tournament.

"Yes!"

Hearing those words, the unkempt master teachers who were lying on the floor stood up and heaved a sigh of relief. They shot a glance of gratitude toward Zhang shi.

If not for this Zhang shi, most of them would have been unable to clear the test.

It was fortunate for them that Zhang shi had caused such a huge uproar.

Ignoring everyone's reactions, Hong shi announced, "Moving on to the third test, this shall be a test of wisdom!"

"Wisdom forms the basis for a cultivator to learning new knowledge. The higher one's wisdom is, the stronger one's capability to learn, and thus, the greater potential a master teacher wields! Don't worry, this test won't be as dangerous as the one before. It only involves... reading!"

"Reading?"

Everyone was taken aback.

"Un. There's a total of fifty-six bookshelves here, and there are five thousand books on each shelf. These are from my individual collection, and I can assure you that the books on each shelf are identical and it is impossible for any competitor here to have read them before. The subjects the books span from cultivation techniques, battle techniques, rearing spirit beasts, all the way to my personal comprehension toward cultivation. I'll give you two hours to browse and memorize the contents of these books!"

With a wave of his hands, the fog covering the center of the stage vanished, and row after row of bookshelves appeared before everyone's sight.

Each shelf was completely filled with books, or to be exact, five thousand each.

"The rules behind this test is simple, you just have to read the books on the bookshelf. In two hours, I'll use a unique method to test your understanding of the content, and through this, determine your wisdom," Hong shi said.

"This is the test?"

Hearing the rules, Zhang Xuan scratched his head in embarrassment.

He might not be confident in anything else, but in terms of reading... To put it in terms of a marathon, he was innumerable streets ahead of all other competitors. Even an 8-star master teacher would have to kneel in defeat before him!

For this to be the test... He felt as though he was bullying the other competitors.

"Forget it. I'll just intentionally make a few mistakes when answering the questions later on... Anyway, my goal is just to pass the test... And this time, I've to make sure that I don't break anything else of Hong shi's!"

Zhang Xuan made up his mind.

He did feel guilty for messing up the test, thus causing the other competitors to be unable to take the test.

But he really didn't do it intentionally... In the first test, he only planned to stop the formation. How could he have known that his clone would accidentally exert too much strength and destroy the stone pedestal?

As for the second test, there was no one in the world who would be able to hold themselves back after hearing of the atrocities the Otherworldly Demon had committed. Honestly, Zhang Xuan felt that he had let the other party off the hook too easily by allowing him to commit suicide. If this wasn't the Master Teacher Pavilion, Zhang Xuan would have surely punished that Otherworldly Demon personally...

But of course, it was likely that Zhang Xuan wasn't a match for the other party, so it was fortunate that that wasn't the case.

Regardless of whether he had done so intentionally or not, it was the truth that he had caused immense damage in his wake for the previous two tests. Thus, he was determined not to allow the same mistake to occur in this test. At most, he would just read fewer books, or perhaps... intentionally make some mistakes in the answering of the question. It would suffice as long as he passes the test.

Low profile!

Zhang Xuan thought that it would be best to keep a low profile and not attract too much attention!

If the others were to learn of his thoughts, they would surely burst into tears.

You call this keeping a low profile?

Look at Hong shi, he's already on the verge of going insane. If you call this low profile, all of the celebrities in the world would have been fired from their jobs already!

Gesturing grandly, Hong shi declared, "Alright, choose a bookshelf each. The time starts... now!"

"Quick!"

"Memorize five thousand books within two hours? How can that possibly be done?"

"Are you a fool? Hong shi didn't say that we must take in the content of all five thousand books! We just have to remember as many as we could..."

"Indeed. Even though, as 4-star master teachers, we possess photographic memory, it would still be difficult for us to memorize the content of a few hundred books within this span of time. Five thousand books... even a 6-star master teacher would be incapable of such a feat!"

...

Hearing that the test had started, all of the participants quickly rushed forward to one of the bookshelves.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan leisurely walked up to the last bookshelf remaining after everyone was done picking their own.

The books on the bookshelves were clearly new. Most likely, they were freshly copied over. The labels were a little bizarre, and to Zhang Xuan's surprise, he truly hadn't seen any of them before.

He had collected innumerable books from several libraries, and while it might be an exaggeration to say that even combining the knowledge of everyone present here wouldn't match up to his, it wasn't too far away from the truth!

Given the huge collection of books he had read, Zhang Xuan actually hadn't seen any one of these five thousand books before. It seemed like Hong shi had truly put a lot of effort into this tournament.

Gently sliding his finger across the books, Zhang Xuan collected them into the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Hmm? There are loads of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan cultivation technique manuals here."

Taking a closer look into the books that he had collected, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

There were actually several hundred Transcendent Mortal 4-dan cultivation technique manuals on the bookshelf!

He had been struggling to find cultivation technique manuals of this tier, and it was a huge stroke of luck that he managed to find them here. With so many books here, he might be able to compile a complete Clarifying Turbidity Realm Heaven's Path Divine Art, thus inducing a leap in his cultivation.

'Compile!'

On the outside, Zhang Xuan causally picked out a book and began flipping through it. However, his consciousness was actually immersed in the Library of Heaven's Path.

The Library of Heaven's Path shook, and all of the Transcendent Mortal 4-dan cultivation technique manuals which he had collected before gathered together.

Before long, a brand-new book appeared before his eyes.

Chapter 582

Daze Book Reading Technique

Beneath the stage...

"Given that the test is on reading books this time round, Zhang shi... shouldn't cause any trouble, right?"

"I... think so..."

Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and the others wiped the cold sweat off their forehead.

This Zhang shi seemed to be bent on causing a huge ruckus for every single test he took. It was as if he would feel uncomfortable if he didn't scare them to death.

They were initially worried that Zhang shi would cause something in the third round as well, but from the looks of it now, the chances should be near null.

After all, unlike the first two tests, this test consisted of simply reading. There didn't seem to be any room for Zhang shi to cause any trouble.

"Hmm? What is Zhang shi doing?"

Just as they heaved a sigh of relief, Ling shi voice cried out. Alarmed, Pavilion Master Kang and Su shi leaped from their seats. "What's wrong? Did he destroy the bookshelves? Or did he burn the books?"

The duo quickly turned their sights to Zhang shi, only to see the latter reading peacefully.

The shocks that Zhang Xuan had caused them had left a deep trauma in their hearts. As such, whenever they hear of anything relating to him, they would immediately think that the latter had done something catastrophic.

Seeing the tense looks on the duo, Ling shi was speechless. Pointing forward, he said, "That's not it. Rather... Everyone seems to be in a rush to cram as many books in as

possible, but why is he standing completely still after grabbing that book?"

"Hmm?"

Pavilion Master Kang and Su shi finally understood what was wrong about the scene.

They saw Zhang shi walking up to the bookshelf and tracing the books with his fingers, seemingly trying to look a book that interests him. After choosing his book, he flipped it open and entered into a daze again!

It was exactly how he'd reacted before the Otherworldly Demon. Could there be some special significance behind his dazing off?

Zhao Feiwu's eyebrows shot up as she exclaimed, "Could this be the Daze Book Reading Technique?"

"Daze Book Reading Technique?"

Pavilion Master Kang and the others were bewildered by Zhao Feiwu's words.

"Actually, back when Zhang shi was taking the examination for other occupations, he utilized the Beast Pummeling Taming Method, the Knockout Treatment Method, and the Formation-Crushing Kick Technique. So, I'm wondering if this is another technique of his!"

Zhao Feiwu had been with Zhang Xuan for a significant period of time, and she had witnessed many inconceivable means from the latter.

"Beast Pummeling Taming Method? Knockout Treatment Method? Formation-Crushing Kick Technique?"

The three 4-star master teachers glanced at one another in confusion.

What the heck are these?

I don't seem to understand what you are talking about...

"Oh, it's actually like that..."

Zhao Feiwu began explaining the various incidents she had encountered in detail.

"There's such a thing?"

Upon hearing of the matters, the three master teachers widened their eyes in shock. It felt as though what they had just heard came from a dream.

To tame a savage beast just by beating it up; to heal anyone just by knocking them out; to break any formation with just a single kick... Why did it sound like something that had come out of a fantasy novel?

It seemed like this fellow truly couldn't be assessed through common sense... anyone who tried to do so would probably go mad.

Since there were so many precedents... perhaps, he might truly have such a unique way of reading books.

"But even so, if all he's staring going to stare at is a single page, surely there would be nothing for him to read and learn?"

After recovering from the primary shock, more doubts emerged in their minds.

No matter how formidable your 'Daze Book Reading Technique' is, even if it allows you to comprehend the content within in an instant... if all you are just going to stare at one page the whole time, how are you supposed to read anything else?

At the very least, shouldn't you flip the pages of the book?

"Is Zhang shi... giving up on this stage?"

They weren't the only bewildered ones. There were some among the crowd that noticed this peculiarity, and they were confused by Zhang Xuan's actions too.

In the previous two rounds, he had caused so much trouble that even Hong shi was left on the verge of a frenzy. The crowd below must be blind if they couldn't notice his uniqueness.

Naturally, such a 'unique' person would have the spotlight on him. The crowd thought that he, just like the other participants, would quickly flip through the books to memorize as many of them as he could. And yet, after picking up a single one... he stopped moving altogether.

Wasn't his efficiency a little... way too low?

There was no way he could match up to the others with this kind of speed?

Did he use up all of his talent in the past two rounds?

...

Oblivious to the reactions of the crowd, at this very moment, Zhang Xuan was staring at the nearly compiled Clarifying Turbidity realm Heaven's Path Divine Art with gleaming eyes.

He thought that he would only be able to compile it after reaching Huanyu Empire. Never in his dreams did he expect to be able to perfect it through this preliminary selection test.

With the cultivation technique perfected and sufficient number of spirit stones in his storage ring, it wasn't a problem for him to reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle right now.

It was a pity that he was in the midst of the preliminary selection test. If he were to cultivate the Heaven's Path Divine Art right here, who knows how many eyeballs would pop out from their sockets...

Thus, all Zhang Xuan could do was reread the manual and understand the essence of the cultivation technique entirely. After he was done, he turned his attention to the other books.

'To think that there would be books on souls here as well... '

Sweeping through the rest of the five thousand books, he found quite a few books about soul as well. Most of them were Hong shi's notes on his comprehension of the topic.

As a Transcendent Mortal 6-dan Cosmos Bridge realm expert, Hong shi's possessed a unique interpretation of the topic of souls.

'Compile!'

Zhang Xuan compiled the notes on soul with the techniques Mo Hunsheng gave him.

Soon, a book was formed.

Transcendent Mortal 5-dan Heaven's Path Soul Art!

'To think that I would get two complete Heaven's Path cultivation technique through this preliminary selection,' Zhang Xuan thought in agitation.

He had come with the thought of just getting the Master Teacher Tournament over and done with. He didn't expect to be given enough valuable books to perfect a cultivation realm of Heaven's Path Divine Art and Heaven's Path Soul Art.

This meant that his fighting prowess could be raised significantly once he found some free time to cultivate.

The rest of the books weren't of much use to Zhang Xuan. He swept across them with his mind, but he couldn't find anything that interest him. Thus, he drew his consciousness out of the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Only ten minutes have passed?"

When his consciousness returned, he realized that only ten minutes had passed.

In total, they were given two hours. In less than a tenth of the time, Zhang Xuan had already finished browsing through all of the books. If he were to say that he was done with the test, Hong shi could very possibly faint from shock.

But still, he couldn't possibly stand idly here and wait for others to be done!

"Forget it, since I still have some time, why don't I try memorizing the content in those books as well!"

Since Zhang Xuan had nothing better to do now, he decided to try memorizing and deciphering the content of the books as well.

But of course, he would be doing so through the Library of Heaven's Path. After all, it was much more efficient that way.

Upon making this decision, Zhang Xuan immediately dived straight into action. Immersing his consciousness back to the Library of Heaven's Path, he picked up a book and began reading through it.

Hualalala!

Back then, when he was only at Tongxuan realm, he was already able to read at a speed dozens of times faster in the Library of Heaven's Path. With his strengthened soul, this ability of his had been further enhanced.

In the time when the master teachers outside read through a handful of books, he was already done memorizing the content of all five thousand books.

As such, Zhang Xuan turned to the other books in the Library of Heaven's Path.

In the past few months, Zhang Xuan had gathered more than ten million books in the Library of Heaven's Path, and he hadn't had the time to browse through them yet. Since he was free now, he decided to take a look at them.

Time passed swiftly as his mind was completely immersed in those books. Suddenly, Hong shi declared, "Alright, time's up. Everyone, put down the books in your hands!"

Hearing that time was up, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Withdrawing from the Library of Heaven's Path, he put down the book and took a glance at the other competitors.

At this moment, everyone looked a little fatigued, and their faces were considerably pale.

Two hours of operating one's mind at full throttle to memorize the content of those books had taken a huge toll on them.

"How many books have you memorized?"

"820 books. What about you?"

"I did slightly better than you, I managed to memorize 917 books!"

...

Putting down the books in their hands, everyone walked to Hong shi. There were some hushed conversations between some of the participants.

Given that their Soul Depths were all beyond 10.0, they possessed photographic

memory. Still, it was no easy feat to browse through and memorize all those books.

Honestly, eight to nine hundred books in two hours was the limit for most 4-star master teachers.

Ruohuan gongzi walked over and asked, "Zhang shi, how many books did you memorize?"

"Me?" Fearing that he would scare the other party to death if he were to utter the truth, Zhang Xuan scratched his head and replied, "It should be the same as yours!"

"Same as mine? I read 1240 books, did you reach around 1200 books too?" Ruohuan gongzi asked doubtfully.

Given how formidable Zhang shi's performance was all along, how could the other party have the same result as him? Ruohuan gongzi found the other party's words hard to believe.

"Err... I think it should be around that amount. Right, how will Hong shi assess the number of books we have read?" Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

Since this was a test on Wisdom, clearly, they couldn't be assessed just by the number of books they managed to read. More importantly, the participants must be able to memorize and comprehend the content... But how was this going to be tested? After all, they couldn't possibly recite the content of the books they have read line after line given the sheer number of books they have read!

"I don't know either. Hong shi should be revealing it soon!"

Ruohuan gongzi was perplexed too.

To be fair, reciting or writing down the content would be the best way. But... this is just the preliminary selection. They couldn't possibly drag it out over several days just for this single test, it would be too inefficient!

Besides, how many books do they have to memorize to pass the test?

Furthermore, the word count in each book was different. If they were to count purely by books, that might introduce so biasedness in the results.

And in truth, all of the other participants also shared the same confusion.

"Hehe, is everyone worried about how the test will be carried out?"

Seemingly noticing everyone's doubts, Hong shi chuckled. "Don't worry. Since I've proposed this test, naturally, I have my own way of assessing you!"

Stroking his beard, Hong shi's eyebrows shot up. "Based on my experiments, an average 4-star primary stage master teacher can memorize around five hundred books in two hours. But of course, as geniuses of your respective power, the expectations of you are much higher!"

"Thus, after much deliberation, I've decided to set the bars at... 800 books. Those who fail to memorize 800 books will be eliminated from the tournament!"

"800 books?"

Amongst the crowd, around a dozen young men's faces paled.

Clearly, the number of books they had read didn't reach that number.

"But of course, each book is unique, and thus, we have to consider the varying length and the difficulty of the content of each book as well. Thus, while the standard I've set is 800, if you specifically choose to only memorize the thinner and easier books, your score might end up below 600!"

Hong shi continued, "To ensure fairness in this aspect, I've applied for a treasure from the headquarters... the Book of Emptied River!"

Chapter 583

Book of Emptied River

"Book of Emptied River? What is that?"

"I've never heard of it!"

"Given that it's an artifact that Hong shi applied to the headquarters for, it must be extraordinary!"

"Indeed!"

...

Hearing of the Book of Emptied River, confusion surfaced on the faces of the master teachers on the stage.

No one here had heard of it, and even Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and the others were perplexed over this matter.

Seeing the confusion on everyone's faces, Hong shi explained with a smile, "As master teachers, everyone should have heard of the saying that knowledge isn't just words or information, it has its own weight as well!"

"I've heard of that saying!"

"Knowledge will reinforce one's mental fortitude and refine one's disposition!"

"The more knowledge accrued, the denser one's soul will become. It's said that back then, Kong shi was able to sink the earth and tilt the oceans with just a single stomp, and that's because the knowledge he harnessed within him encompassed the entire world!"

"Indeed! After Kong shi departed, even though his 72 direct disciple possessed cultivation comparable to him, they weren't capable of exerting the same might as he did!"

...

Discussions broke out amidst the crowd.

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but nod his head as well.

He didn't know too much about the affairs of Kong shi, but from the books, he learnt that knowledge carried weight as well.

Even though knowledge was intangible, it could make a person more cultured and collected.

"Since knowledge has weight, naturally, it can be measured. And the artifact to do so is the Book of Emptied River!"

Hong shi continued, "Empty the river sediment to reveal true gold, part the veiling fog to uncover clear moon. The Book of Emptied River is able to peer through all of one's facades to weigh one's knowledge.

"This artifact was created by an 8-star master teacher ten thousand years ago, and it harnesses a function to search one's soul. As long as you place your hand on it, it'll determine the weight of the knowledge you have accrued within a certain period of time!

"Of course, it can only weigh into the knowledge one has accrued; it can't analyze one's thoughts, so there's no need for you to worry! The one I've borrowed from the headquarters is an inferior good, but it is more than enough to check the number of books you have read."

"Weigh one's knowledge?"

"This... How incredible!"

"Indeed, this is amazing. As expected of an artifact from the headquarter!"

...

Upon hearing that this artifact was capable of assessing the amount of knowledge one had accrued, everyone was amazed.

"Usually, if a teacher instructs his student to study, even if the student lazes off, the teacher isn't able to check. But with this artifact, he could simply weigh his student's knowledge and determine whether his student has been diligent or not!"

"This is also the main reason why the Book of Emptied River was created."

With a flick of his finger, a book appeared before everyone's eyes.

The book was snowy-white in color and average in size. However, its very presence seemed to induce an intense spiritual energy disturbance in the surroundings, indicating that it was no ordinary artifact.

Placing the book on the table before him, Hong shi turned to the crowd and explained, "The Book of Emptied River will emanate seven different colors depending on the amount of knowledge one has accrued within a specific period of time. The colors are namely red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet! Every rise in color equates to 800 books. Meaning... if the Book of Emptied River glows red, it means that you've passed the examination; if it glows orange, it means that you've managed to memorize the content of 1600 books, so on and so forth. Thus, you will come up one by one to touch the book!"

"To think that it would be so simple!"

"Given that the artifact was made by an 8-star master teacher, we have no qualms about the fairness of the test!"

Hearing Hong shi's explanation, everyone came to a realization and nodded their heads.

Since it was a treasure from the headquarter, there was definitely no trouble at all.

"I'm done for..."

But contrary to everyone's delight, Zhang Xuan's vision went dark, and he nearly fainted on the spot.

If he'd known that he was going to be assessed by such an artifact, he would never have read so many books! In that two hours, the other competitors might have only read a few hundred to more than a thousand books, but he, by browsing through the books using his soul, had managed to read around 200,000 books...

He thought that the test would involve a few questions testing him on the content of the books, and he could easily keep a low profile... Who knew that everything would spiral out of his control so quickly? How was he supposed to keep a low profile like that?

There was no way he could make an artifact created by an 8-star master teacher lie for him!

What was he supposed to do now?

While Zhang Xuan was conflicted, Hong shi stroked his beard and asked the crowd, "Alright, let's begin the test. Who wants to go first?"

"This..."

Everyone glanced at one another, and after a moment of hesitation, everyone's eyes suddenly turned to look at Zhang Xuan in unison.

"Why don't we allow Zhang shi to go first again?"

"Indeed! Zhang shi, feel free to go first. We're in no hurry at all!"

...

A few of them urged Zhang Xuan forward.

But before Zhang Xuan could reply, Hong shi, upon seeing the sight, staggered and nearly spewed blood.

Of course none of you will be in a hurry! All of you are just hoping that Zhang shi will cause some kind of trouble once more so that you can pass the test easily!

This might be good news to you... But how am I to account this matter to the Master Teacher Pavilion if such a farce were to occur once more!

With a reddened face, Hong shi immediately raised his hands and instructed, "Alright, since no one has stepped forward, let's go by age once more. But this time, we'll start from the oldest!"

It wasn't that Hong shi wanted to discriminate against Zhang shi, but this fellow... was

simply too fearsome.

If he were to allow him to go up first, who knew what would happen to this Book of Emptied River.

At the very least, the Ghost Domain Illusory City and Otherworldly Demon belonged to him, so he could still bear the burden of them breaking. However, the Book of Emptied River was borrowed from the headquarter, and it had to be returned after the test!

"I'm going last?"

Not expecting even a 5-star master teacher to be so scared of him, Zhang Xuan shook his head, not knowing whether he should laugh or cry.

In any case, going first or last made no difference to him. All that mattered at the moment was for him to pass the test, so he didn't pay too much heed to the matter.

Besides, he didn't have the effort to be thinking about it either! The most urgent matter at hand was to figure out how he could hide the knowledge which he had just learned...

...

Hearing the decision made by Hong shi, Pavilion Master Kang and the others were also dumbstruck. Zhang shi, to be able to instill such fear into the host of the Master Teacher Tournament, sure is talented!

Now that the rules had been established, the rest was simple. The first participant to head up was the oldest master teacher of the group-a master teacher from Mingxia Empire.

This master teacher was also among the top ten of the list of contenders to look out for, and his cultivation had reached Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle. Upon hearing that he was to be up first, he started walking toward the Book of Emptied River.

Everyone's eyes gathered on him.

Taking a deep breath, the master teacher placed his hand on the book momentarily before withdrawing it. The snowy-white book shook for an instant before a clear crisp

sounded, and a red light shone.

"Red light, he has passed the test!"

"Wonderful!"

"To be able to weigh one's knowledge, this artifact really is amazing!"

Seeing the Book of Emptied River in operation left everyone excited.

In their view, artifacts were mainly used in battle or to raise one cultivation. This was their first time seeing an artifact capable of testing one's knowledge.

Hong shi nodded his head in commendation as he asked, "How many books did you read?"

"Reporting to Hong shi, I've read a total of 1238 books!" the master teacher replied.

"Un, not bad!" Hong shi complimented before announcing the result. "Mingxia Empire's Liu Quan has passed the test. Next, Hengsha Empire's Zhang Mingzhi."

Hearing his name being called, a young man stepped forward-Zhang Mingzhi. Even though he was the second oldest among all of the master teachers gathered here, his cultivation was only at Transcendent Mortal 4-dan primary stage, and he was ranked at the lower end of the group.

Walking to the Book of Emptied River, he placed his river on it.

But different from before, the Book of Emptied River didn't react at all. It was as if his hands had never touched it.

"It seems like he failed to read 800 books!"

After waiting a moment later and confirming that there was no reaction from the Book of Emptied River, everyone shook their heads.

"I have only read 771 books," Zhang Mingzhi explained with a bitter smile.

He thought that since he was just a little off from reaching 800, he might be able to smoke his way through. But from the looks of it now, it was impossible to fool the Book

of Emptied River.

"Un!" Hong shi nodded. "Zhang Mingzhi has failed the test and he'll be eliminated from the tournament. Next..."

After the first two participants, everyone got a better understanding of the mystical effects of the Book of Emptied River. Following which, based on their age, the master teachers tested the number of books they have read one by one.

Two hours later, all 53 participants, with the exception of Zhang Xuan, had been tested.

This Wisdom test wasn't as simple as it seemed. In total, seventeen people were eliminated, and after some questioning, all of them had failed to memorize 800 books. In fact, there was one who memorized 799 books, but the Book of Emptied River still deemed him to have failed, and he could only leave in disappointment.

"The results of the Book of Emptied River sure are accurate!"

Seeing how the Book of Emptied River could gauge the difference of even a single book, the crowd couldn't help but be impressed by its accuracy.

As expected of a treasure from the headquarters, it was indeed fearsome!

Of the 35 people who had passed the test, the one with the best result at the moment wasn't Luo Xuan nor Liao Wuzhi. Surprisingly, it was one of Zhang Xuan's acquaintance... Song Chao!

During his test, the Book of Emptied River actually emanated an orange glow... this meant that he had memorized a total of 1600 books!

To be able to memorize so many books in just two hours, his memorization ability was nothing short of monstrous.

Even Zhang Xuan was surprised by his results.

Even though that fellow looked a little slow on the surface, he didn't expect him to have such a good memory.

Ruohuan gongzi's result of 1200 or so books was also amongst the forefront.

"Last but not least, Zhang shi!"

Following Hong shi's declaration, everyone turned their eyes to the troublemaking young man.

"Zhang shi is about to be assessed. I'm really curious to see what his results will be!"

"I don't think he'll fare too well in this test. I took a look at him during the test just now, and all he did over the course of the test was take out a book and go into a daze... Under such circumstances, it will be difficult for him to achieve good results!"

"I think so too, but... No matter what, this is Zhang shi! Given his astounding results in the previous two tests, I find it hard to believe that he will be eliminated in this round!"

"Let's wait and see then..."

...

After the previous two tests, Zhang Xuan had already become the center of attention. Everyone was curious to see how the fellow who smashed the previous two tests would fare in this one.

Seeing that he couldn't hide any further, Zhang Xuan walked forward with a depressed look.

He had been wracking his brain over this problem throughout the entire duration, but he still couldn't find a feasible solution to it.

"Forget it, I'll just have to get it done with..."

Knowing that it was impossible for him to avoid it, Zhang Xuan could only muster his courage and step forward. He placed his hand on the Book of Emptied River and retracted it quickly.

Then, he stared at the book, curious to see what color it would glow.

Chapter 584

Spiritual Perception Book Reading Technique

Under Zhang Xuan's stare, the Book of Emptied River remained motionless, as though nothing had been done at all.

"Why isn't it moving at all? Could it be that... he failed the test?"

"It can't be... That would truly be disastrous..."

"But given how formidable Zhang Shi is, how could he possibly be unable to memorize 800 books?"

After waiting a moment longer, seeing the Book of Emptied River remaining motionless, everyone was taken aback.

There was no reaction on the part of the Book of Emptied River, it could only mean that the number of books Zhang Xuan read was less than 800!

And if he didn't meet this mark, it means that he would be... eliminated!

No matter how astounding his results were for the previous rounds, he would be disqualified from this tournament.

How could this be?

"This is such a huge pity! I thought that given how formidable Zhang Shi is, he would surely be able to get into the top ten. To think that... he would fall here!"

"It's indeed surprising how he failed to memorize 800 books!"

"He should have known he would have ended up like that when he went into a daze..."

A commotion broke out amidst the crowd. There were some who expressed their pity while there were some who gloated over the matter as well.

The outstanding performance of this Zhang shi in the previous two rounds had convinced others of his capability, and many saw him as the dark horse of the tournament. Never in their dreams did they expect him to be eliminated in such a manner.

"This..." Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and the others felt as though their heads were bursting apart. They were on the verge of tears at this point.

They were still worried that Zhang shi would cause some kind of trouble, but in the end, it turned out that... he didn't pass the test at all!

This meant that all of the hopes they had pinned on him had been crushed!

Pavilion Master Kang had an awful expression on his face for a long moment before he managed to recover. Sighing, he shook his head and said, "In the end, it seems like Zhang shi is still... much too young!"

Even though he was talented and had a formidable teacher, he was still unable to stand his ground on such formal occasions!

Sighing, a dejected look surfaced on Pavilion Master Kang's face. He seemed as though he had aged by a decade in an instant.

He had devoted significant effort into this tournament, and he thought that with Zhang Xuan's appearance, the long trend behind Myriad Kingdom Alliance's poor performance in the Master Teacher Tournament could be broken... but in the end, his hopes had fallen empty, just like many times before!

On the other hand, Hong shi trembled, and a frenzied look appeared on his face.

Who was the young man before him?

Yang shi's student!

Even though the latter had put him in a very awkward position in the previous two rounds, he still thought that this was to be expected.

After all, how could a direct disciple of an 8-star master teacher be someone ordinary?

And yet, the other party ended up being eliminated...

The main goal of Pavilion Master Mo in leaving behind a high-tier spirit stone was to motivate Zhang shi as well as to win a favor from him...

And yet, the latter actually failed in the preliminary selection. How was he going to survive as a master teacher now that he had gotten on the bad side of the pavilion master of the headquarters?

Not to mention, there was an 8-star master teacher standing behind Zhang shi...

He could feel tears welling up in his eyes, threatening to spill at any moment.

Zhang shi passing the test was awful enough, but him not passing the test was even worse!

He must be the first host of the Master Teacher Tournament to land in such a state.

But even so, since the result was out, he couldn't change his words. Otherwise, the preliminary selection would lose its meaning, and his integrity as the host would be questioned. Thus, he could only muster his courage and announce, "Since the Book of Emptied River didn't glow, it means that Zhang shi didn't pass the test. Alright, let's move on to the last test..."

Halfway through his announcement, he suddenly noticed the shocked widened eyes of the crowd below, as if they had seen a ghost.

"What's wrong?"

Perplexed, Hong shi turned around and looked, and in an instant, he was dumbfounded as well.

Unknowingly, the Book of Emptied River was already floating in the air, and its entire body was glowing a bright shade of red.

Just when Hong shi was contemplating the reason behind the difference in the shade of red, the color of the glow changed-orange. And after which, orange, green, blue, indigo, and violet...

In an instant, it was as if someone had opened up a rainbow kaleidoscope, or the most brilliant and beautiful firework had exploded. Bright colors filled the entire surroundings.

"Seven... colors?"

Hong shi was stunned.

He had seen before someone inducing a red glow, an orange glow, a yellow glow, a green glow, but... seven interchanging colors, what the heck?

Could it be that the Book of Emptied River had suddenly got high on something, so it decided to show a few colors to celebrate?

Or did it suffer a stroke and malfunction?

But... such a matter had never happened before!

Suddenly, someone amidst the crowd exclaimed, "Could it be that the Book of Emptied River had just finished analyzing Zhang shi's knowledge... and it's reflecting his results now?"

"To take so long to analyze? Is that even possible?"

"For it to take so long, how many books must he have read?"

Hearing those words, a huge commotion broke out.

If this matter had happened to someone else, they would have surely just attributed it to the book malfunctioning. But since the person in question was Zhang shi... they couldn't exclude any possibility.

Given how this fellow was able to tear down the Ghost Domain Illusory City and convince an Otherworldly Demon to commit suicide, it wouldn't be unimaginable for him to turn the Book of Emptied River into a firework simulator...

Kacha!

While the crowd was in the midst of their discussion, a crisp sound suddenly echoed. The Book of Emptied River, after flickering for innumerable times, suddenly swayed. A crack slowly crept across it, and it fell from the sky, torn into two halves.

"Ah..."

Seeing the precious Book of Emptied River being torn apart, everyone was shocked for a moment before realization struck them.

"There's no doubt about it now, it is true!"

"Yes, Zhang shi must be the culprit behind it. Otherwise, how could it possibly have broken all of the sudden?"

If they were still hesitant as to the reason why the Book of Emptied River was going bonkers all of the sudden, upon seeing it torn into two, they were confident that it was Zhang shi's doing!

Given the many precedents that fellow had set, who else could it be?

Hong shi sure was pitiful... Breaking an object borrowed from the headquarters, he would surely be punished severely.

Thinking so, everyone turned to look at the elder on the stage with a sympathetic look.

They were just about to utter words of consolation when what they saw made their eyes widen further.

Upon seeing the torn Book of Emptied River, not only did Hong shi seem in the least panicked or sorrowful, excitement was even gleaming in his eyes. His face flushed a deep shade of red out of excitement, and if not for the etiquette he had cultivated over the years, he might have leaped up in exhilaration.

What was going on?

Didn't you borrow this artifact from the headquarters? Since it has been destroyed, shouldn't you be distressed? Then why are you trembling uncontrollably in agitation as though you have eaten an aphrodisiac?

"...What happened to Hong shi? In the previous two stages, when Zhang shi destroyed his possessions, he had a clear look of displeasure on his face. Why would he look so excited this time round?" Zhao Feiwu was perplexed.

"Most probably..." Pavilion Master Kang contemplated for a long period of time before continuing, "...he has just gotten used to it!"

"Gotten used to it?"

The excited Hong shi staggered upon hearing those words.

How open of a heart must he have to get used to having his prized possessions being shattered?

Naturally, the reason why he was happy wasn't because he had gotten used to having his items being destroyed but that... Zhang shi wasn't eliminated!

The Book of Emptied River might be precious, but compared to getting on the bad side of Pavilion Master Mo and Yang shi, it was nothing at all.

It was clear which was the lesser of the two evils. Given that Zhang shi had passed the test, naturally, this was something for him to celebrate.

But still... He was probably the only host in the history of Master Teacher Tournaments to be delighted over having his own possession destroyed.

"Red light means one has memorized 800 books, orange light means one has memorized 1600 books, so on and so forth... Given that all of the lights have flickered continuously... Zhang shi, exactly how many books have you memorized in the past two hours?"

Recovering from his negative emotions, Hong shi turned to look at the youngster with doubt in his eyes.

Given that memorizing 5600 books would induce a violet light, and that fellow had induced the violet light to appear as though a firework, even causing the inferior-tier Book of Emptied River to break into two from being overloaded...

How many books must he have read for such a situation to occur?

Thinking of the same thing, curious, the others also turned their gazes to him.

"How many books?"

Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella.

The matter which he had been troubled over really came to be.

He had been worried about this matter for the entire period of time, but what had to happen would eventually still have to happen.

If he were to tell the truth and say that he had memorized more than two hundred thousand books while the others were struggling to memorize a thousand... would Hong shi die of fright on the spot?

"Cough cough, I wasn't counting. I think it should be around ten to twenty thousand books..." Awkward, Zhang Xuan decided to divide the figure by ten.

"Ten to twenty thousand books?"

But still, the astonishing amount was still sufficient to shock everyone present here.

While others were still reading seven to eight hundred books, you had read more than ten times of what they did. Are you sure you are still a human?

A master teacher among the crowd exclaimed, "That can't be. There is only a total of five thousand books on the shelves, and I've been looking at you throughout the examination. You have been dazing off, and you didn't flip through those books either. How could you have memorized the contents of so many books?"

This fellow had been dazing off like a fool right from the start. He had been holding the same book from the start to the end, so how could he possibly memorize the contents of all of the books on the shelf?

Not to mention, there was only a total of five thousand books up there. How in the world did you read ten to twenty thousand books?

"This..."

Scratching his head, Zhang Xuan was at a loss. But still, this was not the first time he had stumbled by such a situation, so he was able to recover quickly. Coughing lightly, he explained, "This concerns a unique book reading technique that my teacher imparted me... Even without flipping through the books, I can still read through them! As for the additional books... After I was done with the books on the shelf, I realized that I still had some additional time, so I went on to read the books I keep in my storage ring as well..."

Knowing that it was impossible for him to explain this matter, he decided to push this

matter to the 'mysterious teacher' of his. In any case, given that he had such a 'huge backing', there was no need for him to worry at all.

"To read through books without flipping through it?"

Everyone was confused.

The words were contained within the book, how could one read a book without flipping through it? Does he have the ability to peer through material objects?

Does such a technique really exist in the world?

But why haven't I heard of it then?

While everyone was skeptical of Zhang Xuan's words, Hong shi's body suddenly trembled, his face paled, and he muttered with a slightly hoarse voice, "Could... Could it be... But how is that possible?

"Hong shi, could it be that you've heard of such a technique before?"

A master teacher couldn't help but ask upon seeing the other party's reaction.

Everyone also turned their gazes over.

As a 5-star master teacher and a Transcendent Mortal 6-dan expert, Hong shi was indubitably the most knowledgeable of them here, be it cultivation or worldly experience.

"Indeed, I happen to have heard of such a matter before..."

Hearing the question, Hong shi recovered from his shock. He glanced at Zhang Xuan and thought of a certain person, and a look of respect gradually surfaced.

"I had the privilege of listening to Hongyuan Empire's Pavilion Master Mo's lesson once, and he mentioned such a matter before. If my conjecture is right, it should be..."

"A technique that only a Saint 2-dan expert is capable of... Spiritual Perception Book Reading Technique!"

Chapter 585

Celestial Chess

"Spiritual Perception Book Reading Technique?"

"Saint 2-dan?"

All of the master teachers below stared at one another in confusion.

They had never heard of such a term before.

Instead of answering the question straight away, Hong shi said, "Beyond Fighter is Transcendent Mortal, followed by Half-Saint, Nascent Saint, and finally, Saint. I believe you all should be aware of these cultivation realms!"

"Un!" The crowd nodded their heads.

Most of those present were all master teachers. Even though Saint was still very far off from them, perhaps even out of reach, they had at least heard of it.

"Half-Saint and Nascent Saint are just intermediary stages while Saint, just like Transcendent Mortal and Fighter, consists of 9 dans!" Hong shi continued.

Half-Saint and Nascent Saint are just two normal realms, just like Origin Energy realm and Yin-Yang realm. On the other hand, Saint was the name for the entire set of cultivation realms.

Just like Fighter and Transcendent Mortal, it could be divided to nine tiers.

"The first dan is known as Void Pursuit realm. At this realm, one will be capable of flight. As for the second dan, it is known as... Spiritual Perception realm!"

With a grave look on his face, Hong shi said, "Only at this level can one open their 'Incipient Eye' and awaken their Spiritual Perception."

Someone couldn't help but ask, "Spiritual Perception... What's that?"

He had heard of the concept of souls, but he had never heard of Spiritual Perception before.

Hong shi explained, "Spiritual Perception is a unique capability that only Saints possess. As we know, upon reaching Consonant Spirit realm, one's soul becomes aligned with one's body, thus allowing one to temper one's soul and strengthen it!"

Everyone nodded their heads in agreement.

Transcendent Mortal 5-dan Consonant Spirit realm opened up a whole new world to cultivators. At this level, not only would a cultivator be able to train their physical body and zhenqi... they would be able to train their souls too.

"A strong soul can achieve unimaginable feats; you will understand this upon reaching that realm. Once one's soul reaches a certain level... one becomes able to extend the reach of their soul and perceive everything that it touches. In fact, one's sight would even be clearer than what our eyes are capable of... This is what Spiritual Perception is!" Hong shi said.

"Extending... the reach of one's soul?"

"For a soul to be able to extend beyond one's body to conduct observation... how powerful must one be?"

"It can't be... Is Hong shi saying... Zhang shi already possesses the strength of a Saint 2-dan?"

Everyone leapt in shock.

Saint 2-dan? How was that possible?

Zhang Xuan was also perplexed by the situation unfolding around him. All he had spouted was nonsense, how did Hong shi draw the line to the Saint realm?

Hong shi shook his head.

"Naturally, Zhang shi can't possibly be a Saint. There's no need to worry, allow me to finish my explanation first. You'll understand it after I'm done!"

"Reading via Spiritual Perception is much more convenient and efficient than reading

manually. This is also the reason why Saints accrue knowledge swiftly, and they grow at an astounding pace.

"While Zhang shi isn't a Saint, he seems to possess an ability equivalent to this as well. If I'm not mistaken... an expert must have dug out the Incipient Eye of a Saint 2-dan and transplanted it to him using some unique method, thus allowing him to read and memorize content swiftly!"

Even though Hong shi was the one raising the conjecture, he still couldn't help but feel shocked by the matter.

Only a Saint who had opened his Incipient Eye could awaken his Spiritual Perception.

Theoretically speaking, if an Incipient Eye was dug out and transplanted onto another person, as long as it was done properly, that person should be able to awaken his Spiritual Perception as well.

But of course, due to the lacking cultivation, that person wouldn't be able to utilize the Spiritual Perception properly. At most, he would only be able to use it on reading books.

But even so, for a low-tier master teacher, its significance was immense.

To be able to read ten books in the time it took for others to finish reading one, it was just a matter of time before one surpassed all of one's peers.

It was no wonder Zhang shi was able to be adept in so many occupations despite his young age. It had to be the working of this ability of his!

Most probably... Yang shi had prepared this specially for him just for this.

To dig out a Saint 2-dan's Incipient Eye and transplant it on another perfectly... How powerful must Yang shi be?

Just the thought of it sent shivers down his spine.

It was no wonder Pavilion Master Mo feared the other party so much, going to the extent of even using a high-tier spirit stone to please the other party. An expert of such caliber was indeed qualified to be fawned upon by him.

"To transplant the Incipient Eye of a Saint 2-dan on someone else?"

"To be able to read swiftly even without flipping pages?"

"Not to mention, to be able to read books in the storage ring as well?"

"It is no wonder you could read so many books within two hours. But still... to be able to memorize all of these, isn't your memory a little way too good?"

"Indeed. Just browsing through a book doesn't mean that one has necessarily memorized it. What is truly fearsome is for one to read swiftly while assimilating its contents!"

...

Hearing Hong shi's explanation, everyone came to a realization. They turned to look at the young man before them with a look of fright.

To be able to dig out the Incipient Eye of a Saint 2-dan, what kind of terrifying background does this fellow have?

Amidst everyone's shock, Ruohuan gongzi's eyelids were twitching violently. Depression loomed over his head.

It was just a moment ago that he asked Zhang shi how many books he had read, and the latter replied that he had read the same number of books as him. This had left Ruohuan gongzi happy for quite a while. He thought that he had finally found something that he was on par on with that monster, but in the end...

How in the world can your twenty thousand books be around the same as my one thousand books?

Even if you wish to console me, please do it with some sincerity!

Interrupting into the noise, Hong shi said, "Alright, regardless of how it is, given that Zhang shi has memorized the contents of more than twenty thousand books, as can be proven by the shattering of the Book of Emptied River, I hereby announce that he has cleared the test. Is there anyone with any objections?"

"None at all..."

The crowd hurriedly shook their heads.

You must be jesting! The other party read twenty thousand books and even crippled the Book of Emptied River. Even if we were to have objections, would you listen to them?

"Un, since that's the case, let's move on to the last test of our preliminary selection-intelligence!"

Hong shi turned to look at the remaining participants.

"Even with the support of a teacher, the path of cultivation is ultimately individual. Other than hard work and talent, more importantly, one has to possess superior intelligence. Even when studying the same cultivation technique or battle technique, different students will interpret it differently and thus, the extent of benefit they could derive from it would differ as well. One can easily become a master teacher with talent, but to wish to become a capable master teacher relying solely on that, I can tell you it's nigh impossible!

"As such, intelligence is crucial to walking further as a master teacher.

"Intelligence is indeed important to a master teacher... But how can one test their intelligence? Will they be given a cultivation technique to analyze?

"But analyzing a cultivation technique would make the test biased toward some. Everyone would have differing levels of compatibility with a specific cultivation technique, and besides, talent and wisdom also counts in it as well. It doesn't seem possible to isolate intelligence and test it as itself!"

The crowd was puzzled.

Intelligence is of utmost importance to a master teacher, everyone present here could make the association. However, such a quality couldn't be quantified easily, and given such, how could comparisons be made?

Even if you can measure wisdom through weighing knowledge, how can you measure intelligence?

Even when attempting to comprehend a cultivation technique, a person with lower intelligence would surely find it easier to comprehend a technique aligned with his

constitution as compared to a person whose constitution is incompatible with the technique.

"Hehe, I understand your concerns, and I've thought a lot about this issue as well."

Noticing everyone's worry, Hong shi chuckled, and with a wave of his hand, the fog veiling another corner of the round stage scattered, revealing a seemingly ordinary gazebo.

Seated in the gazebo was a white-robed old man, and a gray chessboard was placed on a stone table in front of him. Black and white stones intersected one another atop the chessboard, as though yin and yang assailing one another-a chess formation.

The old man had an impassive face, and there wasn't the slightest vitality that could be felt from him. With a look, it was clear that he was a puppet.

"This is Celestial Chess. Its rules are completely different from all other chess games existent in the world, thus forming its own school. Back then, when I was touring around the world, I chanced upon it in some ruins. I don't know who created it, and there weren't any explanations regarding the rules either. Intrigued, I spent many years attempting to decipher it, but even so, I only managed to comprehend around forty to fifty percent of it."

Waving his hand once more, a wall not too far away from the gazebo shimmered, and an image of the layout of the chess in the gazebo was projected on it. It was entirely foreign to everyone present here. Even those who had immersed themselves in chess in the past were unable to draw on their experiences to decipher this.

"A chess formation?"

"It seems so. But given that no one knows the rules... how will the participants be assessed?"

"I've no idea as well!"

There were many among the crowd who were learned in the Way of Chess, but seeing the profound formation projected on the wall, they realized it was entirely different from what they had learned before, and this left them dumbfounded.

"In Celestial Chess, the heavens and earth are the chessboard, and the stars are the

stones. It is intricately aligned with the essence of the world. One won't be able to comprehend anything by seeing the formation on the wall, but on the pillars in the gazebo, there are some words left behind by the previous owner of the chessboard.

"Through these words, one is able to decipher the rules of the game.

"After deciphering the rules, one can challenge the puppet in the gazebo. If one were to make an invalid or a losing move, one will find himself incapable of placing the stone down on the board. This test has nothing to do with talent, cultivation, or anything at all, it is purely a match of intelligence. Those with higher intelligence will be able to decipher more of the rules and make more moves whereas those with lower intelligence will have limited comprehension of the rules and find the number of moves they can make limited as well. To pass this test, you'll have to make at least six valid moves," Hong shi explained.

"This... To actually use chess to gauge one's intelligence, amazing!"

"The heaven and earth as the chessboard, and the stars as the stones, how domineering!"

"Through this chess, one would indeed be able to isolate intelligence from other external factors. It is truly a fair test!"

...

Hearing the rules, everyone nodded their heads in agreement.

The Way of Chess was highly demanding on one's intelligence. Some who devoted decades to the game might find themselves outmatched by a child who had barely learned it for a few days, albeit rarely. This didn't necessarily mean that the child was more knowledgeable than the adult, just more intelligent.

As such, there was a saying among top chess players: 'Chances are null if one fails to reach the top by twenty!'

Without sufficient intelligence and talent, it would be nigh impossible for one to reach the top. It's cruel, but such is the world.

Given that this Celestial Chess operated by entirely different rules compared to all other games in the Master Teacher Continent, and one was to compete with the puppet

through deciphering the limited words written on the pillars, it was indeed the best way to quantify one's intelligence.

As expected of a 5-star master teacher, his means were indeed exceptional.

"All master teachers who enter the gazebo will only be given an incense's time to read and decipher the words on the pillars before starting the match with the puppet. If one exceeds the timing or is unable to put down his piece, that would be the end of the test."

Hong shi waved his hands and said, "Alright, now that I've finished explaining the rules, let's begin the test!"

"Yes!"

The participants nodded their heads.

"Since there is only one chess board, we can only go one by one. Thus, let's decide the sequence..."

Hong shi glanced at the crowd.

In the first test, Zhang Xuan was the first to take the test, and he destroyed the Ghost Domain Illusory City, thus no one was eliminated. In the second test, due to the Otherworldly Demon committing suicide halfway through the test, only the three men who fled in the midst were eliminated. And in the third test, seventeen people were eliminated.

After the three tests, of the fifty-six initial participants, only twenty were eliminated, leaving behind a hulking thirty-six.

"Why don't... I go first?"

Zhang Xuan stepped forward.

Given that there were thirty-six people in total and given that just the preparation time in itself was one incense's time, by the time everyone was done, the sun would have already set. Since that was the case, he might as well quickly get it over and done with so that he could rest.

"Cough cough..." Seeing Zhang Xuan walk over, Hong shi nearly choked on his saliva.
"You? Don't even try!"

I am not so courageous as to let you go first after you wrecked the previous three tests!

Chapter 586

Failure?

Knowing what the other party was worried about, Zhang Xuan said, "It's just a chess game, I don't think it's possible for me to destroy the chessboard..."

Everything before... was just carelessness. Now that he knew the rules, he would surely make sure to take precautions and make only six moves... As long as he were to show some restraint, it would be impossible for anything awry like in the previous few tests to happen.

Ignoring Zhang Xuan, Hong shi waved his hands and spoke affirmatively.

"Why don't we go by age once more? We'll start from the oldest!"

I also thought that nothing would go awry in the previous test! After all, it was just a test on reading books. Who could have imagined that the Book of Emptied River which I borrowed from the headquarter would be destroyed?

Just think about how much damage you have caused since the tournament started! And you still want to go first? Dream on!

"Alright then."

Seeing how even a 5-star master teacher was scared to such a point, not even giving him a chance to explain himself, Zhang Xuan shrugged helplessly.

It seemed like he could only bide his time here and wait for the others to be done.

"It is fortunate that Hong shi stood his ground! Otherwise, who knows what would happen this time round..." Pavilion Master Kang and the others also wiped the cold sweat off their foreheads upon seeing the scene.

When Zhang Xuan offered to go first, all of them also leaped in shock.

While it seemed implausible for anything to happen in a chess game, the person in

question was Zhang Xuan! Given his unconventional way of doing things, there was no way they could be certain!

In any case, the safest bet was to put him at the very last.

While they were deciding on the rules, among the participants, Liu Quan of Mingxia Empire's eyelids were twitching uncontrollably.

He just happened to be the oldest among the group... Who in the world did he offend for him to have to go first each time?

It was not like he did anything wrong, he was just the oldest among all of the participants here. Was there really a need for him to go first consecutively?

But in any case, being the first or the last was unlikely to make any difference in this test anyway. It was just a difference in the mental state.

Taking a deep breath, he drove his Soul Depth and activated the Heart of Tranquil Water. After which, clasp his fist toward Hong shi, he proceeded over to the gazebo.

The others also quickly turned their sights over.

Liu Quan walked to the four pillars propping from the gazebo one by one, and after which, he fell into deep contemplation. It didn't take too long for an incense's time to be up. With a frown, he walked to the opposite end of the chessboard from the puppet, picked up a stone, and lightly placed it down on an empty spot.

Huala!

The stone floated in the air for a moment before slowly falling down onto the chessboard.

"He managed to place it..."

"It seems like he has made a right move!"

Seeing that the stone had been successfully placed down, everyone heaved a sigh of relief.

Hong shi had said previously, the stone couldn't be placed if the move was an invalid

or losing move.

Hu!

The old man opposite of him also put down a stone.

Seeing the move the old man made, seemingly put in a difficult position, a deep frown appeared on Liu Quan's forehead. But his dilemma didn't continue for too long. Soon, he placed down another stone as well.

Just like that, they quickly exceeded the minimum requirement of six stones to pass the test, and soon, they reached their ninth stone.

But on the tenth, Liu Quan found himself unable to push his stone down anymore.

"Mingxia Empire's Liu Quan passes with nine stones! Next! Fenglie Empire's Han Zhaoji..." Hong shi announced.

Han Zhaoji walked up onto the stage.

Not too long later, he left the gazebo with an excited expression on his face. He had passed the test with a score of seven stones.

Following which, the next candidate went up.

After five consecutive successful challenges, the remaining participants felt much more confident. But at this point, the streak was broken. The sixth challenger found himself unable to put down the fourth stone, and the next four challengers that went after him failed the test as well.

Eventually, it was Luo Xuan who broke that losing streak.

At this point, everyone realized that the formation on the chessboard would change for each participant, and thus, everyone would be unable to emulate the moves of those who had gone before them. This ensured the equality of the test.

Time passed, and the sky soon darkened. Just like what Zhang Xuan guessed, by the time the thirty-five master teachers were done, a full moon was already hanging in the sky.

Even though those who came for the tournament were all geniuses, many still fell in this test. While the number of eliminated participants wasn't as exaggerated as in the previous test, a total of nine people still failed.

However, most of Zhang Xuan's acquaintances, such as Ruohuan gongzi and Song Chao, still managed to pass the test.

Surprisingly, the one holding the current record wasn't a participant from the strongest Fleeting Cloud Sect or the second strongest White Helios Sect; rather, he came from an empire that was of similar standing to the Myriad Kingdom Alliance.

The cultivation of this master teacher could be considered to be near the lowest among the participants, but his intelligence seemed to be exceptional. Against the puppet, he managed to hold on for sixteen steps, and the impressed old man puppet even offered a word of compliment, "Good."

"Zhang shi, it's your turn!"

After everyone was done, Hong shi turned his gaze to the bored Zhang Xuan with a slightly apologetic look.

The latter wished to go first, but due to his own fear, he forced the latter to the back instead.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan stretched his back before walking over to the gazebo.

The gazebo wasn't too big—around an average person's height. The first thing he saw upon entering was that the closest pillar to him had the four words 'East', 'South', 'West', and 'North' on them.

These four words didn't possess any artistic conception belonging to a painter behind it, they were just ordinary words.

Turning his sight to the second pillar, there were words on them as well... 'Spring', 'Summer', 'Autumn', and 'Winter'

As for the next pillar, there were only two words... 'To' and 'Fro'.

And for the fourth pillar, there was only a single word... Reason!

"North South East West, Spring Summer Autumn Winter, To Fro, and Reason? This... What the heck are these?"

Zhang Xuan frowned.

He thought that there would be more detailed hints, but they were just normal words.

Four pillars of eleven words, but there were no links among them whatsoever, and none of them had anything to do with chess either. What was he supposed to decipher?

After looking at each of the pillars, he turned his attention to the chessboard.

The chessboard looked much more chaotic than before. With just a single glance, Zhang Xuan was plunged into confusion.

"Celestial Chess, heaven and earth as the chessboard, and stars as the stones..."

Frowning, Zhang Xuan recalled what Hong shi said and a thought suddenly struck him. "North South East West refers to space, Spring Summer Autumn Winter refers to time, To Fro... refers to position, and Reason... refers to the heart!"

"Space, time, position, and heart..."

All the knowledge that Zhang Xuan learned previously flowed through his head, and the light in Zhang Xuan's eyes slowly intensified.

It was no wonder why Hong shi was intrigued by it. The name of the Celestial Chess wasn't just for show. It was indeed emulating the heavens and earth as the chessboard!

It built on a person's heart to construct a vast world and used it as the chessboard. It was indeed a formidable game.

"I wonder how far I can go based solely on my comprehension and intelligence."

Upon understanding the rules behind the Celestial Chess, Zhang Xuan chuckled lightly.

He had depended heavily on the Library of Heaven's Path and Eye of Insight on his previous stages. Given how simple the current stage was, he was curious to see how far he could go on his own capability.

Turning around, Zhang Xuan walked over to the opposite of the stone table and sat down. Studying it for a moment, he decided on a position, grabbed a stone, and decisively placed it down.

...

"Do you think that Zhang shi will break the Celestial Chess?"

"That should be impossible; it's just a chess game. Besides, one will be unable to put his stone down if one makes a wrong move."

"It is indeed unlikely for anything to happen to the Celestial Chess... But I still think that it won't end that simply. Why don't we bet on it then?"

"What do you want to bet on?"

"I bet that Zhang shi will destroy the Celestial Chess. If I win, you will hand over your Silk Fan to me. Otherwise, I'll give you the Emerald Pearl which you have been eyeing!"

"Deal..."

...

As soon as Zhang Xuan walked into the gazebo, discussions immediately broke out among the crowd. There were even a few who betted on it.

"Cough cough!"

Hearing the excited bets in the surrounding, Zhao Feiwu, Pavilion Master Kang, and the others slapped their foreheads in embarrassment, fearing that others would know that they were acquainted with Zhang shi...

To think that a participant of the Master Teacher Tournament would actually be regarded as the God of Destruction...

"It will be the dueling round right after this test. Even though we still don't know the rules behind it, if Zhang shi and Ruohuan gongzi were to both proceed on to the next round, this would be the best results that our Myriad Kingdom Alliance has ever achieved over the years!" Ling shi analyzed and said.

"Indeed!" Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head.

There were only twenty-seven people left in the tournament.

There were seven powers whose two participants were already eliminated.

In other words, even if Zhang shi and Ruohuan gongzi were to fail terribly in the dueling round, the results would still be much better than what the Myriad Kingdom Alliance had ever achieved in the previous tournaments.

It was fortunate that Ruohuan gongzi had managed to reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle under Zhang shi's help, and his experience with Zhang shi had helped temper his soft qualities such as courage. Otherwise, it would have been difficult for him to pass those tests.

In other words... Zhang shi had played a pivotal role in the current outstanding results of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance.

Just as they were thinking about this matter, Su shi suddenly exclaimed, "Look! Zhang shi is making a move!"

Everyone quickly lifted their gazes and saw Zhang Xuan seated right before a puppet. He placed a stone down on the board.

In that moment, everyone waited with bated breaths.

Fortunately, the stone went down. After which, the old man opposite to him picked up a stone as well, but at that moment, he suddenly froze, as though he had no intentions of playing the stone at all.

"What's going on?"

"It can't be that... Zhang shi is intending to destroy the puppet instead of the Celestial Chess?"

Upon seeing the old man's frozen body, everyone stared at one another in bewilderment.

They were just contemplating whether the Celestial Chess would be destroyed by Zhang shi, and the latter, with a single step, caused the movements of the puppet to

freeze... It couldn't be that it was really broken?

Wasn't that a little... way too exaggerated?

Everyone turned to look at Hong shi, and the latter had a deep frown on his forehead as well.

After a short moment later, Hong shi couldn't stand the tension anymore. He walked over to the gazebo and looked at the puppet.

And a moment later, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Just like the others, he thought that the puppet might have malfunctioned. But after taking a closer look, the puppet was still operating perfectly.

"Please make your move!"

Standing beside the puppet, Hong shi bowed.

Even though the old man was a puppet, it possessed spirit and it was capable of interpreting human speech. The both of them had often played against one another, and Hong shi possessed deep respect for him.

"Un!"

After a moment of hesitation, the puppet nodded and placed his stone down.

Zhang Xuan was stunned for an instant, but he soon picked up a second stone and placed it down.

Weng!

But the chess simply floated in midair, refusing to go down no matter how much force Zhang Xuan put into pushing it down.

"He can't place the stone? Does this mean that... his move is invalid?"

"So... he failed?"

Everyone was taken aback. Even Hong shi was in disbelief.

Based on the rules, one would only be considered to have passed the test after making six moves, and currently, Zhang Shi had only made a single move. Did this mean that... he had failed the test?

"Shit... Does this mean that there's a mistake in my comprehension?"

Gedeng! Zhang Xuan's heart skipped a beat.

He used neither the Library of Heaven's Path nor the Eye of Insight this time... Was he really going to fail just like that?

Chapter 587

Dueling Round Begins

All along, regardless of what it was, he had always used the Library of Heaven's Path and Eye of Insight to interpret and understand profound topics. But this time, he had decided to test out his own intelligence by playing with the rules he interpreted from the words inscribed on the pillars.

He thought that he would at least be able to get six pieces down, yet... he found himself stuck on the second stone. Could he have really screwed up this time?

Was his intelligence really that poor?

Zhang Xuan was on the verge of tears.

He had proceeded smoothly in the past three tests, he didn't expect to fail here.

Hong shi's face was also twitching violently.

To be unable to put down the second stone... How was he supposed to clear up the mess this time? He couldn't possibly say that considerably Zhang shi's talent, he was an exception and could clear the test just by putting down a single stone?

If only he'd known this would happen, he would have surely allowed Zhang shi to go first!

In the end, such a matter happened. If Zhang shi were to bear a grudge against him over this matter, he would surely be screwed...

What the heck was this! For a 5-star master teacher, the host of the Master Teacher Tournament, to have his heart hanging over a mere preliminary selection, he couldn't help but feel intense indignation.

Gritting his teeth, Hong shi mustered his courage and announced, "Since Zhang shi was unable to put down the second stone, this means that... he has failed the test! Alright, since the preliminary selection is over, let's move on to the dueling round..."

But at that moment, the puppet opposite to Zhang Xuan suddenly pushed the chess board aside and stood up. A clear voice reverberated in the air.

"I have lost!"

"Lost?"

"What does that mean?"

"Zhang shi... won against the puppet in a match of Celestial Chess? Not to mention, he even had the other party willingly admit his defeat?"

"Aren't the rules of the Celestial Chess difficult to comprehend? To actually understand the rules within an incense's time to defeat the puppet..."

Everyone was taken aback. The impossibility of the situation was driving them insane.

They thought the reason why Zhang shi was unable to put down his second stone was due to his lack of understanding of the rules. Never could they have imagined that the puppet would admit his defeat in the next moment...

This wasn't just at the level of 'understanding the rules' or not... Rather, Zhang shi had become an expert in the game, an existence that others could only look up to!

"Are you for real?"

Luo Xuan, Song Chao, and the others widened their eyes in disbelief.

They had undergone the test personally, and they knew how profound Celestial Chess was. Those who could put down more than six stones could be considered geniuses among geniuses. And yet, the person before them actually defeated the puppet utterly in his second move...

Was he still a human?

Contrary to everyone's shock, Hong shi felt immense relief instead.

It seemed like every time he was going to announce Zhang shi's loss, the other party would make a huge turnaround...

In that instant, he felt as though he was being toyed with.

If this were to go on, on top of going bankrupt, he would have to worry about his heart malfunctioning due to the excessive shock...

While everyone was dumbfounded, shocked, gritting their teeth, convulsing, kicking, rolling... The person in question, Zhang Xuan, was also bewildered.

He used neither the Library of Heaven's Path nor the Eye of Insight this time, and he was relying solely on his own intelligence to clear this test. As such, he was lacking in confidence.

This was precisely the reason why his heart stopped when he found himself unable to put down the second stone and panicked.

But... Never in his dreams could he have imagined that not only would he clear the test, the puppet would even admit defeat on his own accord...

Just as he was about to say something, the old man before him bowed, and a voice echoed in his mind. "Even though you only made a single move, you sealed all possible paths of advancement and retreat. I'm unable to counter your move at all. Finally, Celestial Chess... has a successor!"

After which, a surge of information suddenly dived into his head.

Hong long!

With this surge of information, countless plausible chess formations and set ups became assimilated as part of his knowledge.

"Soul Impartation?"

Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in shock.

'To be able to allow a puppet to conduct Soul Impartation, how powerful must the person who created the puppet be?' Zhang Xuan thought with a grim expression. But before he could take a look at his newfound knowledge, the puppet before him suddenly fell motionless, as though it had lost all strength. Following which, countless cracks starting creeping across its body.

"This is bad!"

Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in alarm. He quickly rushed forward to stop the impending destruction.

In the information that was transferred to him, he learned of the meaning behind the existence of the puppet-to pass down the heritage of Celestial Chess. Now that it had accomplished its *raison d'être*, the lingering will left within the puppet vanished, resulting in its inability to continue functioning. Naturally, the puppet started to fall apart.

Just that...

Even if you are going to fall apart, at least do it after I'm done with my test, when no one is around! To fall apart at such a time... How am I supposed to face Hong shi?

Placing his arm on the old man, Zhang Xuan infused his *zhenqi* into him in hopes of forcefully keeping in intact. Yet, contrary to his expectations, the *zhenqi* he infused collided with the other party's *zhenqi*.

Boom! The puppet immediately exploded into dust.

And the chessboard and gazebo also seemed to have lost its source of power, and they collapsed, turning into ruins.

"The heck..."

Zhang Xuan was frenzied.

I only did that out of goodwill so as to sustain the puppet for a moment longer... How could I've known that such a thing would occur?

But actually, thinking deeper into it, Zhang Xuan also realized his error. The puppet was sustained by a lingering will, and most likely, this lingering will was infused into it through the means of a soul oracle. Otherwise, it shouldn't be possible for a lifeless puppet to be capable of Soul Impartation...

And his Heaven's Path *zhenqi* happened to be the nemesis of soul oracles. What should have been a simple collapse turned into an explosion instead with the interference of his *zhenqi*...

Turning his gaze to the crowd, Zhang Xuan saw everyone staring at him with widened eyes, as though looking at a monster.

"Did you see that? Even the Celestial Chess wasn't spared!"

"I told you that it would be destroyed right? And to think that you didn't believe me..."

"How could Zhang Shi explode the puppet even after it has admitted defeat? This is too much!"

"You're right. But if he didn't do so, how could he maintain his reputation as the God of Destruction?"

...

Everyone whispered with hushed voices.

They thought that perhaps Celestial Chess would be an exception, but in the end, just like the artifacts in the previous three tests, it was destroyed as well! It seemed as though regardless of how valuable an artifact, it only had one fate upon meeting Zhang Shi... Utter destruction!

It doesn't matter how sturdy or resilient you are...

"..."

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan spurted blood.

I really didn't do it intentionally, I was really trying to save him...

I didn't do any of these voluntarily, it was all just coincidence!

"He destroyed something yet again?"

Pavilion Master Kang and the others stared at one another. At this point, there was only one thought in their mind-relief. They couldn't help but feel relieved that they didn't use any valuable artifact in the selection round back then... Otherwise, their Master Teacher Pavilion would probably be bankrupt by now.

"My Celestial Chess..."

Hong shi's lips trembled in agitation.

Only he knew how long it took for him to accrue sufficient wealth to obtain the Ghost Domain Illusory City and the Celestial Chess... and yet, in a single tournament, they were all destroyed by Zhang shi. In just a single day, he was reduced to a poor bloke.

He felt as though a knife was lodged deeply into his chest, leaving his heart bleeding profusely.

Even so, he did see what happened to the puppet clearly.

The puppet was crumbling even before Zhang shi approached it, and Zhang shi was indeed moving to secure it... It was just that his help only made things worse, and an explosion was induced.

But while he knew of this, there was no doubt that the reason behind the crumbling of the puppet was still due to Zhang shi...

If only he'd known this would happen, he wouldn't have bothered with a preliminary round. He would have just gone ahead with duels in an elimination format instead!

It took a while before Hong shi was able to calm down. Exhaling deeply, he forcefully suppressed his indignation.

All he could do now was ask for some compensation from Pavilion Master Mo, and hope that the latter would offer something in exchange for the loss he had incurred... He didn't know how else he could console himself at this point.

Hong shi glanced at the crowd and asked, "Given that the puppet has admitted defeat, it means that Zhang shi has fully comprehended the rules behind the Celestial Chess. Does anyone have any objections against this ruling?"

"No!" Everyone shook their heads.

While the fellow standing before the ruins of the Celestial Chess was indeed a God of Destruction, they had to admit that the other party did possess capability that an average person could hardly imagine.

"Since Zhang shi has completed his challenge, this signifies the end of the preliminary selection. Since it's no longer early, let's waste no time and proceed straight onto the

dueling round!" Hong shi announced.

Since the four tests of the preliminary selection was over, it was time to move on to the dueling round.

"The rules for the dueling round are simple. The duels will be in pairs, and the sequence and matching will be decided by picking lots. The duel need not be a fight, it can also be based on the various core aspects of a master teacher, such as Soul Depth, knowledge impartation, understanding of cultivation, flaws identification, so on and so forth!

"The winner moves on to the next round whereas the loser is eliminated. This will go on until the top ten is out!"

Hong shi glanced at the participants and said, "Is there anything you wish to clarify?"

"No!"

The participants hurriedly shook their heads.

This was the usual format of the dueling round in the Master Teacher Tournament, and the rules were simple as well.

"Alright, we'll start with picking lots. There are 27 people currently, and 16 people will move on to the next round. In other words... there will be five people who will move on to the next round straight without competing," Hong shi said.

There is a fixed rule to dueling rounds stating that no matter how many participants there are initially, after the first round, it should be in a power of two, meaning 2, 4, 8, 16, 32... so on and so forth. This was to ensure greater fairness in the subsequent rounds, especially as the fights became more intense later on.

Only through this sequencing could it be guaranteed that only two people would be competing for the champion spot eventually.

"Alright, let's begin picking lots!"

After introducing the rules, Hong shi waved his hand, and a master teacher walked up with a box prepared beforehand. The remaining twenty-seven participants came up one by one to pick a number.

Zhang Xuan was the same as well.

After a quick look, he shook his head.

It seemed his luck wasn't too good; he hadn't managed to draw the five empty slots that allowed for automatic advancement to the next round.

"I managed to draw the empty slot!"

Just as Zhang Xuan was lamenting his misfortune, he saw Ruohuan gongzi looking at him excitedly. Taking a look at the other party's lot, he saw 'A1, empty' written on it.

On the other hand, written on Zhang Xuan's lot was 'D2'.

Seeing that everyone was done drawing the lots, Hong shi said, "The dueling round will be divided into four main sectors, namely A, B, C, and D, and each sector will be further divided into 1, 2, 3, and 4. Those who draw the same lots will be matched against one another, and those who have the word 'empty' written on their lot will progress straight on to the top sixteen!

"Based on the ranking of the respective powers in the previous tournament, the participant with the higher ranking will have the privilege to choose the content of the duel. Of course, his opponent will have the right to object to the chosen dueling format as well, but the right to object will be limited to once per duel! After that right has been used once, he would have no choice but to accept the next proposed dueling format."

This was similar to the rules employed in previous rules, so there was no need to elaborate on it.

"Alright, the first round will start now. Since A1 is empty, may the two participants who drew A2 proceed on to the stage in the A sector!"

Hong shi waved his hand, and the final area of fog veiling the stage dissipated, revealing four stages. They were labeled A, B, C, and D respectively.

Two young men holding onto the lot which they had just picked walked toward the stage labeled A.

Chapter 588

Challenging Fist Art

As they proceeded onto the stage, Hong shi urged the participants of the other three stages to proceed there as well.

The master teachers who drew B1, C1, and D1 got into their position.

Following which, they began to discuss the content of their duel.

Regarding this, Hong shi wouldn't interfere at all.

And soon, they finished making their choices.

Of the four stages, two chose knowledge impartation, one chose Soul Depth, and the remaining one chose a physical duel.

A competition among master teachers extended way further than mere brute strength; their capability included their supporting occupations, Soul Depth, Impartation of Heaven's Will, knowledge impartation, and many other aspects. If it was just a simple battle, there would be no need to make it so grand.

As such, there were actually very few master teachers who chose physical duel as a means to determine the victor.

"So, this is the real Master Teacher Tournament!" Zhang Xuan remarked in awe.

The previous round was just to weed out the less capable participants; what that was unfolding before him at this very instant was the true competition among master teachers.

As well as the true Master Teacher Tournament.

Gazing at the four stages, Zhang Xuan found a familiar face.

Song Chao!

Even though the preliminary selection wasn't easy, he seemed to have achieved fairly decent results, thus advancing honorably to the dueling round.

The person he was matched with was a disciple of a sect. While that disciple was of similar cultivation realm to Song Chao, he had fared relatively poor in the preliminary round. Knowing that it was unlikely for him to emerge triumphant in other aspects, he, making full use of the advantage derived from the rules, proposed for a straightforward fight instead.

"Begin!"

The gong signaling the start of the match sounded, and the disciple immediately dashed straight toward Song Chao.

Trading blows, a huge wind gushed into their surroundings. Possessing similar cultivation realms, both of them stood their ground and it was hard to tell who had the upper hand.

Even though the stage wasn't too big, there was formation around it. It was impossible for the duo to break the formation with their current cultivation realm, so they could fight as they pleased without any worries.

"It seems like... Song Chao will be able to advance to the next round!"

After looking at the duel for a moment, Zhang Xuan soon deduced that it was likely for Song Chao to triumph over this opponent.

While the duo was nearly equally-matched, Song Chao's movements were much more flexible and careful, biding his time for an ideal opportunity to strike.

As long as his opponent showed the slightest opening out of anxiety, Song Chao would capitalize on the opportunity to defeat him swiftly.

Knowing the likely conclusion, Zhang Xuan turned his attention to one of the stages conducting the knowledge impartation duel instead.

Compared to Song Chao's stage, where the competitors were driving their zhenqi to hurl fists at one another, this side seemed much more refined.

Twenty cultivators of differing cultivation realms were randomly picked from the

square, and the competitors chose ten of them each to form a group.

After dividing the cultivators among the two competitors, they began to conduct their lesson via zhenqi telepathy so as to not interrupt one another.

The time limit was an incense's time; whoever's group experienced a greater degree of growth during this period of time would be deemed the winner.

This kind of competition was much more refined, and it seemed to be more aligned with the disposition of a teacher.

Seeing that it would take some time for the victor to be decided, Zhang Xuan turned to look at the stage where the competitors were competing on Soul Depth.

The two of them held onto a Stone of Insight each, and soon, numbers appeared on them-14.7 and 14.9. Naturally, the latter was deemed as the victor.

This was the simplest and most efficient dueling format.

But still, Soul Depth was the foundation of a master teacher, and most people were unwilling to have it publicly known. As such, it was very rare for participants to choose such a dueling format.

And soon, the first round was over. Just like what Zhang Xuan guessed, Song Chao won.

The two stages dueling via knowledge impartation also came to a conclusion. The one who fared the best induced a breakthrough in a cultivator among his group within the time limit and achieved victory. On the other stage, the master teacher won through a high overall evaluation score and advanced on to the next round.

At the end of the first round, there were some who celebrated, and similarly, there were those who looked gloomy as well. But indifferent to the results, Hong shi announced the lots for the next round.

"For the second round, will the competitors who drew A3, B3, C3, and D2 proceed on to the stage..."

B2 and C2 were empty slots.

Upon hearing that it was his turn, Zhang Xuan walked toward the 'D' stage.

"Zhang shi... drew D2? Why am I so unlucky?"

Seeing Zhang Xuan walk out from the crowd, a young man's face suddenly warped, and he nearly cried on the spot.

He had also drawn D2, which meant that he was matched up against this God of Destruction.

"It is indeed unfortunate that you were paired with him for the very first match..." The mouth of the friend beside him also twitched.

This Zhang shi had been showing outstanding results since the start of the tournament, even destroying all of the artifacts through inconceivable means. If there was a list of competitors whom one didn't want to be matched with, that fellow would surely be at the top.

At the current stage, his reputation was even greater than Luo Xuan's.

To be matched with such a person in the first round, his luck was indeed terrible.

"What do I do now? Should I just forfeit? If I don't forfeit, will he... destroy me too?" The young man asked his friend with a tearful face.

Given how that fellow tore apart everything before him, the young man was seriously frightened that he might be ripped into pieces if he were to stand against that God of Destruction. It was only a tournament, he had no desire to die so tragically...

"Cough cough, I don't think he would go so far as to do it to a human too!" consoled his friend.

"But I also thought the same for the Celestial Chess as well..." the young man retorted.

"This..." His friend was tongue-tied.

That fellow was simply too frightening. If he had a choice, he would rather face the Otherworldly Demon once more than stand against that fellow.

In other words, the pressure he felt from facing Zhang Xuan even exceeded that from the Otherworldly Demon!

"It wasn't easy for you to come to reach this stage, it would be unwise to forfeit at this point. Don't worry, even though that Zhang shi is incredible, he can't possibly be infallible!"

His friend patted his shoulder and said, "In any case, the Myriad Kingdom Alliance fared worse than our sect in the previous tournament. As long as you propose a dueling format that benefits you, there might still be a chance of victory. Once you succeed, with this momentum, you will surely be able to strive for the top eight at least!"

After a moment of contemplation, the young man nodded his head.

"That... you're right!"

Everyone would surely be watching his duel with Zhang Xuan. If he could achieve victory, not only would his confidence be inflated, he might also instill fear in the other competitors as the person who defeated the God of Destruction. With this advantage over his competitors, he just might be able to get into the top ten.

After all, psychological warfare was an essential aspect of a duel as well.

"Fine, for glory!"

Understanding that only with risk could one achieve something great, the young man gritted his teeth and stepped forward.

While he was still frightened, as a 4-star master teacher, he was still able to get himself back into condition swiftly.

"Then let's quickly analyze Zhang shi's weakness then..."

Seeing the young man regain his fighting spirit, his friend nodded his head in commendation. "In the first test, Zhang shi broke the Ghost Domain Illusory City. This means that the Mystic Gate Hidden Jia contained within the artifact is ineffective toward him, hinting that he has excellent mental fortitude and eye of discernment!"

"Un!"

Finding the words rational, the young man nodded his head.

The pitch-black Ghost Domain Illusory City was filled with spirit beings, and without outstanding eyesight, it would be impossible for one to even navigate within it. Under such circumstances, it would be impossible for one to destroy it so easily even if they intended to do so!

"You are unlikely to defeat him in that aspect, so... avoid any duels that concerns one's vision or discernment ability."

The young man added, "Right! So that means that flaws identification and cultivation guidance are out of question!"

His friend continued his analysis. "Ok. Moving on to the second test, he managed to persuade the Otherworldly Demon via his Impartation of Heaven's Will. This means that his Soul Depth is extraordinary... Therefore, you shouldn't compete with him in Soul Depth or knowledge impartation!"

To be able to persuade an Otherworldly Demon to commit suicide with just mere words, this meant that the other party's Soul Depth and mastery of Impartation of Heaven's Will had reached an astounding level. If the young man were to compete with Zhang Shi over this, it was likely that the scene with the Otherworldly Demon might replay.

His friend summarized his analysis and gave his final evaluation.

"As for the third test and fourth test... Even though very little can be said about those tests, it shows that he possesses outstanding wisdom and intelligence. As such, it is likely that his understanding of cultivation is superior. Thus... in conclusion, I think that you should just compete with him in a physical duel!"

"Indeed. If I were to challenge him in a physical duel, considering that he's only at Yin-Yang realm pinnacle while I'm at Clarifying Turbidity realm intermediate stage, it shouldn't be a problem for me to triumph over him!" The young man's eyes lit up upon seeing a ray of hope.

Since there was no way to win via the other dueling format, that leaves him with only one option... Physical duel!

Considering that his cultivation was higher than the other party, he was at an advantageous position.

"But... he has a chance to reject the dueling format that I propose once. What if he were to do so?" After celebrating for a short moment, the young man suddenly thought of a possibility and his smile collapsed.

Even though the Myriad Kingdom Alliance didn't have any say in the selection of the dueling format, especially since they were in the last place the previous Master Teacher Tournament, their participants were still entitled the right to reject a proposed dueling format once.

If he were to propose a physical duel and the other party disagrees to it, wouldn't he be limited to those few other dueling formats once again?

His friend smiled.

"Are you a fool? There are many types of physical duel! You can simply propose a fist duel, and after he rejects it, you can go on and propose a sword duel. There is no way he'll be able to reject you then. Given that you're ranked first in terms of swordsmanship in our sect, there is no way that you will lose to him in a sword duel!"

"That's right!"

Regaining his confidence, the young man's eyes lit up once more. "Thank you for your suggestions. When I defeat him and proceed on to the top ten, I'll surely pay back this favor. Wait for the news of my victory!"

Saying which, he walked over to the D stage with a confident smile on his face.

...

"I am Wu Tianhao from Soaring Cloud Sect. May Zhang shi guide me well!"

Stepping onto the stage, the young man clasped his fist.

"Myriad Kingdom Alliance, Zhang Xuan!" Zhang Xuan nodded in response. "May I know what kind of dueling format Wu shi has chosen?"

"I wish to challenge you in a fist duel!" Following by his friend's advice, the corners of Wu Tianhao's lips crept up.

"Fist duel?" Zhang Xuan nodded his head. "Sure!"

"You don't agree to it? Fine, we'll have a... Ah?"

Wu Tianhao was excitedly prattling on when he suddenly came to realization and froze. "Did you just... agree to my proposed dueling format?"

"I did, you proposed a fist duel, right? Let's start then!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

In truth, Zhang Xuan could tell what the other party was up to-it was simply too obvious! But in any case, it didn't make a difference to him at all.

"..." Wu Tianhao's body swayed weakly.

Why can't you follow common sense? That's cheating, too, you know!

You're supposed to reject my initial proposal so that we can conduct a sword duel...

How can you agree to it so readily!

I was thinking that I could defeat you with my ethereal swordsmanship, but you just had to wreck my plans...

But it's fine this way as well! Even though my fist art is lacking as compared to my sword art, it isn't too weak either. At the very most, I'll just have to use my full strength from the very start. Let's see how you're going to withstand that!

The other party was two small cultivation realms weaker than him, and further, there was a qualitative difference between Yin-Yang realm and Clarifying Turbidity realm as well. As such, Wu Tianhao didn't believe that Zhang Xuan could possibly win the fist duel.

"Since you've agreed to it, let's start then!"

Having made up his mind, Wu Tianhao drove his cultivation, and in an instant, the aura surrounding him surged. For an instant, an image of a majestic tiger stepping out of the woods came into the minds of the onlooker. Clenching his fists tightly, he charged forward.

Chapter 589

Accidentally Used Too Much Force

"What? Why did Zhang shi agree to a duel of fist art?"

Seeing the situation on the stage clearly, Pavilion Master Kang panicked.

The main reason why he didn't think that Zhang shi would be able to win the champion spot was because he knew that such a thing would happen.

In the end, the latter's cultivation was simply too weak. This weakness of his would surely be exploited by his opponents.

The foundation to fighting was one's cultivation, and no matter how formidable Zhang shi's Soul Depth or other qualities were, it would be of minimal help to him in a straightforward duel!

"Indeed, he was definitely rash to have accepted the duel..."

Su shi and Ling shi remarked with an awful complexion.

While the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, given its ranking in the previous tournament, didn't have any say in the dueling format, Zhang shi still had an opportunity to reject the dueling format. Even though the other party proposed a physical duel, he could have rejected it!

On the other hand, Zhao Feiwu had already seen through the ploy of the master teachers and smiled bitterly in response.

"Actually... it doesn't make a difference at all!"

"Hmm?" Frowning, the group turned around to look at Zhao Feiwu.

As long as it wasn't a physical duel, given Zhang shi's astounding talents in all other aspects, there was no way he would lose!

So why wouldn't it make a difference?

"Knowing that the greatest weakness of Zhang shi is his cultivation realm, how could the other party possibly give up on such an ideal opportunity? If Zhang shi had rejected the duel of fist art, there's a high chance that the other party would've proposed a duel of spear, a duel of saber, or something along those lines... He might be able to avoid it once, but he wouldn't be able to do it the second time!" Zhao Feiwu said.

Even though she had never been to a Master Teacher Tournament before, she had read many books on it, and she had a good grasp on its rules.

"This..."

The faces of Su shi, Pavilion Master Kang, and the others froze.

They had overlooked this due to their anxiety.

Besides, as honorable master teachers, they didn't expect Zhang shi's opponent to actually exploit the loopholes in the rules in such a manner.

Upon realizing this fact from Zhao Feiwu's words, their faces immediately puffed crimson in rage.

"Despicable!"

Ling shi bellowed, "How can they be so despicable!"

"But they are still playing within the rules. In the end, this is still a tournament after all. It is natural that they would use whatever means they could to achieve victory." Pavilion Master Kang shook his head. "We can only hope for a miracle to happen now..."

"Miracle? How can a miracle happen so easily? Putting aside how Zhang shi has barely reached Yin-Yang realm pinnacle and it is unlikely that he has fully reinforced his cultivation yet, just the fact that there is a huge gap of two small cultivation realms between them already makes it nigh impossible for him to achieve victory..." Su shi shook his head.

There was a huge difference even in every small cultivation realm of the Transcendent

Mortal realm, not to mention, a full cultivation realm. A Yin-Yang pinnacle cultivator only possesses 800,000 ding of strength whereas a Clarifying Turbidity realm intermediate stage expert harnesses an immense might of 1,200,000 ding. That was a difference of 400,000 ding! This was a gap that mere luck couldn't hope to cover.

"Indeed, the gap between the two of them is simply too great. I don't think it is possible for Zhang shi to reverse the situation as well... Ah?"

Pavilion Master Kang shook his head in dismay as the thought of Zhang shi falling in defeat dominated his mind. However, in the next instant, his body suddenly stiffened, and his eyes slowly widened in shock.

"What's wrong?"

Su shi was baffled by Pavilion Master Kang's sudden reaction.

"Look at the stage..." said Pavilion Master Kang hurriedly.

"At the stage?" Su shi quickly raised his gaze, only to see Zhang Xuan standing alone on the D stage. His opponent, Wu Tianhao, was nowhere to be seen.

"Where is the opponent he is fighting against?" Su shi asked bewilderedly.

How in the world did that fellow disappear in the blink of an eye?

One must know that leaving the stage after the start of the duel meant instant disqualification!

"He... He..."

With trembling lips, Pavilion Master Kang pointed in the sky and said, "He's flying up there..."

"Flying?"

Guangdang!

Su shi and the others nearly fell to the ground.

Flying? Are you saying that that fellow is a Saint?

The group traced Pavilion Master Kang's finger and looked up, and in an instant, a bizarre expression appeared on their faces.

There was indeed a black human silhouette soaring freely in the sky. At this point, he was already around a hundred meters above ground level, but his ascension didn't seem to be stopping anytime soon.

If that fellow in the sky was planning an attack, there was no reason for him to soar so high up. On top of that, he was shrieking non-stop as though he had seen a ghost. Furthermore, he was ascending backward instead of forward, as though a ball which was sent flying with a kick.

"What's going on?" Su shi could no longer hold back his intrigue any longer.

"Zhang shi... lightly pushed him up, and he just suddenly... started flying!" Pavilion Master Kang's lips were twitching uncontrollably.

Even though he had seen it happen personally, he still found it hard to believe his eyes.

That Clarifying Turbidity realm intermediate stage cultivator had driven his cultivation to its maximum capacity and shot a punch straight at Zhang shi.

The might of the fist art was so great that even an expert of Pavilion Master Kang's caliber would have to go on the defensive. But... Zhang shi didn't even attempt to avoid the punch at all. Instead, he faced it with a casual rising trajectory palm strike, and in the next moment...

That fellow was already soaring into the sky...

"Lightly pushed him up?"

Su shi, Ling shi, Jin Conghai, and the others stared at one another in confusion. They felt as though they were listening to a foreign language, and in an instant, they were all left dumbfounded.

Transcendent Mortal 4-dan intermediate stage, that was roughly their cultivation realm as well. Furthermore, the other party was a master teacher like them, meaning his eye of discernment and capability wouldn't pale in comparison to them at all. And yet, with a light push from Zhang shi, he was actually sent flying?

Why did it sound as though it had come out from a fantasy novel? No matter how they tried to process this information, it simply sounded too ridiculous to them!

...

They weren't the only ones who were left dumbstruck. At this very instant, the entire square was completely silent.

In truth, everyone also felt angered by Wu Tianhao's shameless action of proposing a duel of fist art, but upon seeing this sight, their eyeballs nearly popped out.

What just happened?

They had considered the possibility of Zhang shi achieving a victory, but that should have been a difficult one after trading innumerable blows. Yet, to send Wu Tianhao flying with a light push, as though he was simply throwing a pebble, could this all be a dream?

When did a Clarifying Turbidity realm expert become such a pushover?

"No, it's because of Zhang shi's formidable eye of discernment!"

"He used Wu shi's strength against him to send him flying!"

"That's right. He saw through the other party's technique in an instant and used the momentum of the other party's movements against him to send him flying... This technique is the ideal example of 'curbing force with skill'!"

"But everything happened in an instant, how did he manage to react so quickly?"

Soon, there were quite a few people who managed to put the pieces together, but this did little to alleviate their shock.

Everything was over in a flash, but there were a fair number of 4-star master teachers present in the square, and every single one of them possessed outstanding eye of discernment.

Wu Tianhao had put all of his strength into that single fist, but... As the saying goes, 'the branch that does not bend is the first to break'. While thoughtless flexibility can land one in a disadvantageous position, a lack of flexibility can leave one vulnerable.

Zhang shi had seen through the flaws of his battle technique instantaneously and exploited them. Thus, even before his fist could even connect, he was already sent flying.

And so... the sight of the flying man occurred.

Seeing this sight, the eyelids of Wu Tianhao's friend twitched violently, and he nearly spewed blood.

If only he'd known that this fellow was so formidable, he would have never proposed a physical duel. Even if Wu Tianhao wasn't injured by that palm strike, judging from how high he was flying... even if he wasn't crushed into minced meat, he would surely be crippled.

Could it be that... he was the legendary 'pig-like teammate'?

Just as he was filled with self-reproach, Wu Tianhao finally came to the peak of his ascension, and began falling instead. He fell headfirst into the roof of the Alliance Head Residence, and amidst a cloak of dust and screams of agony reminiscent of butchered pigs, he disappeared from view.

"Junior Tianhao..."

Leaping in fright, Wu shi's friend hurriedly dashed toward the direction where Wu shi disappeared. But before he could get far, a voice tinged with embarrassment was suddenly heard from the D stage. "Um, pardon me... I accidentally used too much force..."

Pu!

Accidentally used too much force?

Hearing those words, everyone nearly collapsed to the ground.

You are the weaker one here, the one with the lower cultivation realm. You knocked a person with higher cultivation realm flying, and you still said that you accidentally used too much force...

The more Wu shi's friend thought about it, the more frenzied he felt. It was as if that fellow wasn't content with just smashing through every single test in the preliminary

selection. At the start of the dueling round, he even had to knock a cultivator two small cultivation realms higher than him up into the air...

What kind of monster was this fellow?

Where did the fairness in the world go to?

While he was feeling so stifled that he could go insane, Zhang Xuan was plagued with frustration as well.

That fellow simply charged straight at him with all of his might as soon as the duel began. If it was anyone else, they might have really been forced into a disadvantageous position instantly. But in truth, that attack posed no threat to him at all.

With a might of 1,000,000 ding from his zhenqi cultivation and 1,600,000 ding from his soul cultivation, he was able to harness an immense might of 2,600,000 ding in total. This was on par with a Consonant Spirit realm intermediate stage expert, it would be a miracle if that fellow could withstand it.

But at the same time, he knew that if he were to send the other party flying in a frontal confrontation, it might incur some doubts. As such, he chose to utilize the Eye of Insight to search for an opening in the other party's technique so as to throw him off the stage...

However, he still underestimated that fellow's strength. On top of that, he hadn't had many opportunities to test out his strength ever since the advancement in his cultivation, and thus, he didn't have a clear grasp of his strength yet. As such, he accidentally put in a little more force...

Falling from such a high altitude, even if the other party was a Clarifying Turbidity realm intermediate stage cultivator, he would still suffer grievous wounds. While it was unlikely that he would die from this ordeal, he would probably be bound to his bed for the next two months.

Honestly speaking, Zhang Xuan really didn't do it intentionally.

His face-off with clone, which ended in a tragic defeat for him, had given him a skewed impression of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan experts. How could he have known that that fellow would actually fly so far...

"Forget it. Hong shi, does this count as my victory?"

Since what was done was done, there was no use being conflicted over it. Thus, Zhang Xuan turned his attention to Hong shi and asked.

"Y-yes, you've won!"

Hong shi's lips twitched.

It seemed the other party's destructive capability didn't differentiate between artifacts and humans...

He wasn't the only one harboring such thoughts. The eyebrows of the other participating master teachers on the stage were also twitching uncontrollably.

"By no means should we ever fight with this fellow!"

"You're right, but... if we don't challenge him to a physical duel, what else can we challenge him in?"

"I've no idea as well. But in any case, a physical duel is out of question. Otherwise, who knows what kind of tragic fate could befall us..."

...

While everyone was astounded by Zhang shi's amazing feats in the preliminary selection, they didn't think that he was much of a threat. After all, the other party was a mere Yin-Yang realm pinnacle cultivator. As long as they unleashed their full strength, defeating him shouldn't be a problem at all... But reality couldn't be any further than that...

Wu Tianhao was a clear example.

Just thinking about Wu Tianhao's plight was already sufficient to send shivers down their spines.

Since Zhang Xuan finished his duel early, he turned his attention to the other stages.

In this round, his pair was the only one who resorted to a physical duel. The other pairs chose to battle it out through other means.

In fact, there was even a pair who chose the unconventional 'discourse duel'.

On top of a deep understanding toward cultivation, master teachers must also possess broad knowledge.

The format of discourse duel is similar to Pill Discourse. Both parties would pose questions to one another, and the side that failed to answer correctly first would be deemed the loser.

To ensure greater equity, the duel consisted of a total of three rounds, and the side that won two rounds was the overall winner.

In the discourse duel, the other master teacher from Fleeting Cloud Sect achieved victory.

After realizing that there were actually minimal differences among the different dueling formats, Zhang Xuan quickly lost his interest. Sometime later, Hong shi's voice sounded.

"Alright, since we've decided on the top sixteen, we'll take an hour of rest before proceeding on to the next round to determine the top eight!"

"The results of the top sixteen are out?"

Just as Zhang Xuan was curious to see who was in the top sixteen, he suddenly noticed Ruohuan gongzi walking over with a worried expression.

Chapter 590

Zhao Feiwu's Analysis

"Zhang shi..."

Walking up to Zhang Xuan, Ruohuan gongzi hesitated for a moment, gritted his teeth, and said, "I have something to request of you!"

"Feel free to speak!" Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

While he did have some misunderstandings with this proud genius of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, they had resolved most of their grudges back in the Glacier Plain Court. Furthermore, as fellow participants representing Myriad Kingdom Alliance, if he could be of help, he wouldn't reject it.

"Initially, I don't bear much hope in reaching the top ten. However... now that I'm already in the top sixteen, if I don't at least give it a try, I will regret it for life..." Ruohuan gongzi's face reddened.

Having picked 'A1', he was able to advance to the next round unconditionally.

Humans are born with desire. If he had been defeated in the previous round, he wouldn't have been so conflicted. Now that he was already in the top sixteen-a victory away from getting into the top ten-he couldn't help but harbor some hope.

"...But the one I'm fighting against in the next match is Qin Lei of White Helios Sect!"

With a distressed expression, Ruohuan gongzi uttered gloomily, "I don't have the confidence to defeat him!"

Zhang Xuan turned to look at Ruohuan gongzi and asked, "Qin Lei? The person who is ranked third on the list?"

He had seen this name on the list that Pavilion Master Kang gave him previously. Qin Lei was a genius of White Helios Sect. As a 4-star pinnacle master teacher and a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle expert, he was only below Fleeting Cloud Sect's

Luo Xuan and the Frigid Gale Sect's Liao Wuzhi on the list, and he was a popular contender for the champion spot as well.

"Yes!" Ruohuan gongzi nodded his head.

"If that's the case, it would indeed be difficult for you to defeat him!" Zhang Xuan frowned.

While Ruohuan gongzi improved immensely in the past two months, reaching Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle as well, it would still be difficult for him to compete against disciples of huge sects like his current opponent.

After all, there was a huge gap in the resources they were entitled to over many years, and two months of last-minute training was far from sufficient to cover the gap.

"Thus, I wish to seek Zhang shi's guidance... Regardless of whether I'm able to defeat him or not, you'll have my gratitude!" Ruohuan gongzi quickly said.

Zhang shi had truly fared impressively in this tournament. Even the most popular contenders such as Luo Xuan and Liao Wuzhi found themselves being outshone.

If there was someone who could bring him the closest to success, it wasn't his teacher Pavilion Master Kang but the young man standing before him at this instant.

"I can offer you pointers, just that..."

At this point, Zhang Xuan shook his head before continuing, "...given that we don't even know the content of the duel, how can I offer you any effective pointers?"

There were many different dueling formats to the Master Teacher Tournament, and given that the Myriad Kingdom Alliance was ranked in the last place in the previous tournament, Ruohuan gongzi didn't have the right to choose. Under such circumstances, he could only go along with the proposed dueling format from the other party, so how could Zhang Xuan offer any effective guidance?

After all, the bare minimum to preparing a winning hand was to know what cards the other party had up his sleeves. Otherwise, even if a 6-star or 7-star master teacher were to be present here, he would surely be completely helpless in the face of this situation.

Even if Zhang Xuan wished to be of help, there was nothing he could do!

Ruohuan gongzi hesitated for a moment before saying, "In the previous round, the person he faced was Wu Qing from True Breath Sect. The both of them were nearly equals, so he proposed knowledge impartation and won through it. Against me... I think there's a good chance he might choose a physical duel so as to be spared the effort!"

Wu Qing was also another master teacher whose name was listed in the top ten of the list, but due to his bad luck, he met with Qin Lei in the very first round and ended up being eliminated.

As the both of them were nearly equally-matched, Qin Lei proposed knowledge impartation.

But against Ruohuan gongzi, it was unlikely that Qin Lei would go through that much trouble; the chances were that he would outright propose a physical duel.

Even though the both of them were Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle, the other party had more years of experience behind him. Not to mention, the resources that White Helios Sect provided the other party was far greater than Ruohuan gongzi's. Thus, it was likely for Ruohuan gongzi to be the weaker one in all aspects, be it battle technique or power control.

As such, his guess was actually rather logical. There was indeed a high possibility that the other party would propose a physical duel against him.

"This..."

Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

If it was really a physical duel, then things could be solved easily. It was a walk in the park for him to raise the other party's fighting prowess up a notch within the next hour. However... what if it wasn't a physical duel?

Wouldn't all preparation be done in vain?

Just as Zhang Xuan was just about to say something, Pavilion Master Kang called over to them.

"Zhang shi, Ruohuan, have some food first!"

Turning around, they realized that most of the master teachers had already departed from the stage to rest their wearied bodies and regain their energy.

"Let's head down first!"

There was no use discussing this matter when nothing was confirmed at all. Thus, the duo walked down the stage.

The Alliance Head Residence had prepared quite a luxurious spread. There was even spirit beast meat, an extremely effective nourishment in recovering one's expended zhenqi.

Upon seeing the feast, Zhang Xuan felt his stomach grumble.

"What were you two talking about?" Zhao Feiwu asked the duo with a light smile.

"Oh, Ruohuan gongzi is facing Qin Lei from the White Helios Sect in the next match, and he hopes that I can offer him some pointer for it. However, we don't know what dueling format the other party is likely to choose," Zhang Xuan replied as he filled his mouth with the delicacies before him.

"What kind of dueling format?" Zhao Feiwu cupped her chin, and after a moment of contemplation, she replied, "I think that... it is likely to be comprehension of cultivation!"

"Comprehension of cultivation?" Zhang Xuan, Ruohuan gongzi, and the others in the surroundings turned to look at her.

In truth, most of them had agreed with Ruohuan gongzi's view that the other party would choose physical duel. As such, they were intrigued to see that someone had a different viewpoint from theirs.

"Comprehension of cultivation? But that is a very troublesome duel to hold, and the evaluation is extremely tricky as well. Very few people would choose that kind of dueling format!" Su shi replied.

There were many ways a comprehension of cultivation duel could be held, such as interpreting a battle technique, interpreting a cultivation technique, and so on... But

regardless of which one it was, it was extremely time-consuming and effort-consuming. More importantly, there were many differing viewpoints regarding the topic, and they could all be correct at the same time. In other words, as long as one's interpretation wasn't too off the mark, it would be hard to decide on a winner.

On top of that, as 4-star pinnacle master teachers, it was impossible for their understanding of cultivation to be too far off the mark. As such, there were very few who would opt for such a troublesome dueling format.

"Tell us more about it!"

But still, while the princess before him was lacking in cultivation, Zhang Xuan knew that she was an avid reader, and she had shown that she was particularly astute in guessing the thoughts of others on multiple occasions as well.

"The basis behind my deduction is simple-it depends on what he hopes to achieve in this tournament!"

Zhao Feiwu chuckled mysteriously.

"What he hopes to achieve?" Ruohuan gongzi was taken aback. "Wouldn't it be winning the champion seat?"

The greatest glory one could derive from the Master Teacher Tournament would be to win the champion seat. As one of the most popular contenders for the position, it would be natural for Qin Lei to be eyeing that seat!

"You're right, but what do you know is his greatest obstruction to his goal at the moment?" Zhao Feiwu's eyes narrowed into crescents as she turned her beautiful face toward the young man before her.

"You mean... Zhang shi?"

There was no one present in this square who would offer a different answer than that at this point.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to use the word 'rampage' to summarize Zhang Xuan's performance in the preliminary selection. And after the first dueling round, there was no one else who thought that they could exploit his low cultivation. With this, he had become the strongest contender for the champion seat, standing above even Luo Xuan.

Thus, the greatest obstruction Qin Lei would face in becoming the champion was indubitably him.

"Indeed. Since his goal is Zhang shi, naturally, he doesn't view you as a threat. Thus, in the first place... he has never really thought of you as an equal before!" Zhao Feiwu said.

Ruohuan gongzi's face reddened.

Even though those words were indeed hurtful, he knew that it was true.

Given the disparity between both of their capabilities, the other party indeed had nothing to fear of him.

"However, given that you came from the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, and his goal is to defeat Zhang shi... there is a good chance he will use Zhang shi's greatest strength to defeat you so as to taunt him!" Zhao Feiwu continued.

"My greatest strength?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback by those words.

"Un. Even though you have shown outstanding aptitude in multiple aspects such as your temperament and wisdom, without a doubt, your greatest strength is your intelligence and Impartation of Heaven's Will!"

"That's right!" Pavilion Master Kang nodded his head.

Zhang shi had performed impressively throughout the tournament, but these two factors were what that left the deepest mark on the onlookers.

Using Impartation of Heaven's Will to persuade an Otherworldly Demon to kill himself; defeating the puppet of the Celestial Chest with a single move.

On the other hand, destroying the Ghost Domain Illusory City didn't really reflect much about Zhang shi's capability, especially given that the other participants hadn't had the chance to undergo it themselves, whereas memorizing twenty thousand books was due to his strong background. These two feats paled in comparison to the former two.

"Impartation of Heaven's Will is highly tied to one's Soul Depth, so even if he thought that he could defeat you in that aspect, it would unlikely to be spectacular... but

intelligence is different! A master teacher's intelligence is usually reflected through the depth of his understanding of cultivation, and if he could perform outstandingly in that aspect, he might be able to steal the spotlight from Zhang Shi. This is a good opportunity for him, so I believe that there's a good chance that he will grasp it!"

Zhao Feiwu chuckled as she revealed her analysis. "Rather, I think that a physical duel would be one of the less likely options for him. After all, it is unseemly for a refined master teacher to be engaged in physical brawls. It wouldn't reflect well on him even if he were to win!"

"You're right!"

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Zhao Feiwu seemed to have grasped the other party's thoughts accurately, and her words seemed to fit perfectly as though a jigsaw puzzle.

"Your analysis is right, but how would a duel involving comprehension of cultivation be carried out? After all, we can't possibly find a manual on the spot and decipher it..." Ruohuan gongzi asked in bafflement.

The most direct way for to determine whose comprehension of cultivation is deeper would be for the duo to decipher the same book, but... which book would they choose? After all, wouldn't the result be biased no matter which book is chosen?

"There are other ways to measure one's comprehension of cultivation. If I recall correctly, there's a dueling format known as... 'Flaw Identification', right?" Zhao Feiwu replied with a smile.

"Flaw identification? You mean... the dueling format where both sides each execute a battle technique, and the respective opponents point out the flaws in the executed technique, and whoever manages to point out more flaws is the winner?"

Ruohuan gongzi was stunned. "But... that requires one to have an exceptional eye of discernment and profound comprehension of cultivation. Usually, only higher rank master teachers would do it for lower rank master teachers. For him to point out my flaws..."

He didn't finish his words, but what he wanted to express couldn't be any clearer.

They were both 4-star pinnacle master teacher. For the other party to actually boast of correcting Ruohuan gongzi's mistake, wasn't he being a little too arrogant?

"Indeed. Don't worry, since this Qin Lei wishes to win the spotlight and outshine Zhang shi, there is a very good chance he will choose this dueling format!" Zhao Feiwu smiled.

Since the other party was aiming for the champion seat, he had to shatter the heavy pressure Zhang Xuan was exerting on him first. And for this, Ruohuan gongzi, who was a fellow representative of Myriad Kingdom Alliance, served as the perfect stepping stone.

Only by using the most arrogant way to step down on Ruohuan gongzi would his own strength be emphasized. Only through this way could he finally get on equal footing with Zhang shi.

"..."

Ruohuan gongzi had a bitter look on his face.

What was this?

He thought that he would at least be respected as a fellow competitor in the Master Teacher Tournament given the massive rise in his cultivation, but in the end, the other party only regarded as a mere stepping stone.

"The heck, I'll screw him over!"

The more he thought about it, the angrier he felt. Gritting his teeth, Ruohuan gongzi turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "If this is the dueling format, does Zhang shi have any ideas as to how I can achieve victory?"

To actually challenge a master teacher of equivalent rank to a match of flaw identification... the other party was indeed hubristic. But while Ruohuan gongzi hated to admit it, he had no confidence to face the other party in such a match-off.

Thus, he entrusted his hopes to the young man before him who had created miracles time and time again.

"Ideas?" Zhang Xuan frowned. After a moment of thought, his eyes lit up, and a peculiar smile appeared on his face. "I do have an idea, but it won't be easy to carry

out!"

"Oh? As long as I can defeat it, I'd do anything no matter how difficult it is!"

Hearing that the other party had an idea in mind, Ruohuan gongzi's eyes lit up. He quickly stood up and bowed sincerely. "Zhang shi, I humbly seek your guidance..."

"Er... Alright then!"

Zhang Xuan casually picked up the bowl of meat soup which he was half-done with and passed it over. "Take this and pour it over your opponent!"

"Ah? Pour it... over Qin shi?"

Ruohuan gongzi's eyes widened in shock.

Chapter 591

A Supernatural Occurrence?

I asked you to teach me how to defeat Qin Lei in the duel, why are you telling me to pour meat soup over him instead?

Big Brother, I'm a master teacher, not a thug! To conduct such shameless actions...

Besides, if I were to do that, I would only enrage the other party. What use would it be to the duel?

Ruohuan gongzi thought that Zhang Xuan would at least offer a decent solution given his astounding means, but never in his dreams did he expect the other party to be so... unreliable!

If he were to really do so, his reputation would immediately plummet to rock-bottom!

He wasn't the only one feeling light-headed, Pavilion Master Kang and the others also widened their eyes in shock.

Pouring soup over the other party?

What kind of move is that?

Perplexed, they instinctively turned their eyes over to Zhao Feiwu, in hopes for an explanation.

Given how the latter was able to analyze Qin Lei's thoughts logically a moment ago, she might be able to do the same this time round too!

But with a single glance, they staggered.

Zhao Feiwu's eyes were so widened in shock that they could simply snap out of their sockets anytime now. She was as dumbfounded by Zhang Shi's words as they were.

While her cultivation was lacking, she possessed incredible wisdom that allowed her

to make sense out of most situations... but what in the world does this 'pour it over your opponent' mean?

This... The gap in logic was simply too huge for me to follow!

The dueling format is likely to be flawed identification, and Ruohuan gongzi hopes to win the match... And so, you instructed the latter to pour meat soup over his opponent. Something just doesn't sound right here!

How the heck am I supposed to analyze such a ridiculous situation?

"You aren't willing? Then I can't help you either..."

Zhang Xuan shook his head in disappointment.

He had already offered a solution; if the other party was unwilling to carry it out, there was nothing he could do.

While White Helios Sect's Sect Leader Bai Kaizhi had once laid his hands on Zheng Yang and the others, he had already been punished on the spot, and Zhang Xuan didn't think there was any need to implicate the juniors in this matter. The reason why he was helping Ruohuan gongzi was solely out of their relationship. If the other party wasn't willing to reciprocate, he didn't wish to push his ground either.

Ruohuan gongzi knew that the only hope he had at victory at this point was to follow Zhang Shi's instructions. Clenching his fists, he asked, "If I do as you said... can Zhang Shi really guarantee my victory?"

"Guarantee? No one can guarantee anything. If you believe in me, do as I say. Otherwise, we can just drop the matter!"

Zhang Xuan continued eating.

If Zhao Feiwu's analysis turned out to be accurate, and the other party really intended to slap his face, then he was confident that his plan would bring Ruohuan gongzi to victory.

Otherwise... it would prove to be futile.

"This..."

Ruohuan gongzi fell into contemplation, but it didn't take too long for him to make up his mind. Gritting his teeth, he declared, "Alright, I'll go!"

The top ten would get a chance to study at Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. If he could grasp this opportunity, he would surely achieve incredible accomplishments in the future. If he let it slip through his fingers... Becoming a 5-star master teacher could possibly remain an obstacle that he would never overcome in his lifetime.

Weighing that against Qin Lei... his wrath did seem insignificant in comparison.

The world is like a race to get to the top of a pyramid; the further you advance, the more competition you will face. If Ruohuan gongzi didn't make a move, the other party would simply take him as a stepping stone.

Fairness doesn't exist in this world. If one were to keep thinking of the welfare of others, one could never hope to climb to the top.

"Cough cough. Ruohuan, you should reconsider this..."

Hearing that his student was really going to pour meat soup over Qin Lei, Pavilion Master Kang's eyebrows twitched. "I fear that if you were to do that, Qin shi would beat you to death... and our relationship with White Helios Sect would be a goner!"

Ruohuan gongzi's lips twitched.

Indeed. If he were to do so, the other party might just smash him into a lump of meat paste.

"Would you simply remain still as he tries to beat you? You have legs, run! Besides, there are so many master teachers watching, he won't dare do anything overboard... Besides, you should have confidence in your physical resilience, you won't die that easily!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands. "In any case, I'm here so you don't have anything to worry about. I can guarantee you that as long as you run away after that, he'll allow you to leave without beating you up!"

"..." Ruohuan gongzi.

Without beating me up? Hahaha...

"Alright then!"

Knowing that he had no other choice but to listen to Zhang shi to win, Ruohuan gongzi tossed aside his hesitation. Gritting his teeth, he took the bowl of meat soup and walked over to Qin Lei.

Somehow, it seemed to reflect the desolate sight of a soldier marching to his own doom.

Seeing him walk toward Qin Lei, the lips of Pavilion Master Kang and the others couldn't help but twitch.

While they had faith in Zhang shi, this was... a little too much!

"Zhang shi... will he really be fine?"

Zhao Feiwu couldn't help but ask.

"How can he be fine?" Grabbing a piece of meat and stuffing it into his mouth, Zhang Xuan replied with a slightly muffled voice.

"How can he be fine?"

The crowd's eyelids twitched violently.

If it wasn't fine, why did you instruct Ruohuan gongzi over? Are you that intent on seeing his sorry plight?

The expression on everyone's faces clearly said that they would never let him go if he didn't explain this matter clearly to them. Thus, Zhang Xuan began speaking.

"Your analysis is logical. There's an eighty percent chance that Qin shi will choose flaw identification as the dueling format... however, there's still a twenty percent room of error!"

"Un!"

Zhao Feiwu nodded in agreement.

No matter how logical her deduction was, she wasn't Qin Lei and she couldn't read his thoughts precisely. It was possible for the other party to have other thoughts in mind regarding this matter.

"If I were to pour a bowl of meat soup on you to provoke you, what would you do?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"I would... beat you up!" Zhao Feiwu replied.

"Indeed, that is likely to be Qin Lei's reaction too. However, looking at it from another perspective, such an action could be considered as a direct signal from Ruohuan gongzi that he wants a physical duel. As a 4-star master teacher, Qin Lei will surely deduce this much... Under such circumstances, how do you think he'll react?"

"This..."

Everyone was stunned.

Pouring a bowl of meat soup on someone-that is a clear act of provocation. To be provoked before the duel, it was clear that his opponent wanted him to propose a physical duel...

It would be hard to believe that Ruohuan gongzi didn't have anything up his sleeves given such circumstances.

While Qin Lei might be confident in his fighting prowess as well, Ruohuan gongzi's actions would surely sprout a seed of doubt in his mind. Given how much he wanted the champion seat, he would surely choose to opt for another dueling format so as to avoid any possible mishaps. At the same time, this would also reflect his magnanimity and create a positive impression of himself.

"At the same time, if Qin shi were to attempt to hit Ruohuan gongzi after being poured with meat soup, we'll be able to analyze his movements. If so, we can make some preparations for the duel later on!" Zhang Xuan said.

If the other party didn't execute a battle technique, he would be unable to peer into the other party's flaws. And in a normal and fair duel, it was nigh impossible for Ruohuan gongzi to win Qin Lei.

On the other hand, if Qin Lei were to execute his battle technique out of rage, a book on him would be formed in the Library of Heaven's Path, and Zhang Xuan would be able to exploit his flaws.

As for whether Ruohuan gongzi would be beaten up or not, that wouldn't be any of his

business.

Ruohuan gongzi would just have to treat it as the price of victory.

"I see..."

Hearing the explanation, everyone came to a realization, and they widened their eyes in admiration.

They thought that Zhao Feiwu's analysis was already impressive, but Zhang shi's thoughts were clearly deeper and more thorough.

Within a short period of time, not only did he realize the possible errors in Zhao Feiwu's analysis, he even found a way to cover it up while executing his plan... Incredible!

It was fortunate that he was on the same line as the Myriad Kingdom Alliance; the group shuddered at the thought of facing an opponent like that.

"Look, it's starting!"

At that moment, Su shi suddenly pointed forward.

Everyone turned their gazes over, and at this moment, Ruohuan gongzi was already standing before Qin Lei.

At this moment, Qin Lei was also in the midst of his meal. Perplexed to see his opponent carrying a bowl toward him, he was a little stunned.

"Qin shi, nice to meet you!"

Ruohuan gongzi nodded.

"Y-you too!"

Qin Lei frowned.

"Before we start on our duel, I'd like to discuss something with you..." Ruohuan gongzi said politely.

"Discuss something with me? What is it? If you wish to admit defeat now, there's no need for it!"

Qin Lei harrumphed coldly. But before he could finish speaking, a steaming hot liquid came flying toward him, drenching his robe.

"The heck!"

In that instant, it was as if something within Qin Lei had snapped, and frenzy overtook his rationality.

He thought that that fellow was here to admit defeat in hopes that his pride could be spared on the stage later on. Never in his dreams did he expect a bowl of steaming meat soup to come flying toward him instead...

"I'll kill you..."

Roaring furiously, he immediately drove his zhenqi and a powerful aura came gushing out. He raised his palm and directed it toward Ruohuan gongzi forcefully.

Hu!

But Ruohuan gongzi was already prepared for this. He immediately leaped to the side and ran away. "Pardon me, Qin shi. I didn't do it on purpose, I simply lost my grip on the bowl..."

"..."

Black lines streaked across everyone's face.

To carry a bowl of meat soup over for no reason, and you say it wasn't intentional?

Not to mention, you were around two to three meters away from the other party. For the meat soup to travel that distance despite it being a slip of your hands... you're incredible!

Touch your conscience and ask yourself if you can believe that excuse!

"Damn it..."

After hearing those words, Qin Lei's rage flurried. Just as he was about to rush over to kill that fellow, an elder suddenly stopped him.

"Elder Zhou..."

Seeing that the one stopping him was an elder of his sect, Qin Lei hurriedly stopped.

"Don't fall for the other party's ploy..." Elder Zhou spoke to him through zhenqi telepathy.

"Fall for the other party's ploy?" Qin Lei was taken aback.

"Indeed. The other party is clearly coming over intentionally to provoke you. If you were to strike him now, there is a good chance that you might be stripped of your qualification as a participant in the tournament!" Elder Zhou said.

As a prestigious event held every decade, the Master Teacher Tournament had strict rules. If participants were to fight out of their match, there was a chance that they might be stripped of their qualification.

"But..." Qin Lei's body froze. He understood the logic behind it, but he still found it hard to suppress his anger.

As a proud 4-star pinnacle master teacher to be splattered with meat soup, it would be a wonder if he wasn't angry!

"With the death of our sect leader, our White Helios Sect is currently facing its greatest crisis. You must get into the top ten in this tournament, or else... it'll only be a matter of time before our sect is annexed by the other powers!" Elder Zhou spoke gravely.

He was present in the confrontation against Zhang shi that day, and the sight of Yang shi killing their sect leader was still fresh in his mind.

Having offended a plausible 8-star master teacher, their White Helios Sect was facing the greatest calamity in its existence. Their only hope at this point was for Qin Lei to successfully get into the top ten!

Once he got into Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the other powers would have to reconsider their options before laying their hands on them.

"Since that fellow is here to provoke you, he must have some kind of ace up his sleeves. Or else, he might have already given up on the tournament and he wishes to pull you down with him!"

Elder Zhou continued. "You mustn't fall for his ploy!"

"Then what should I do?"

Qin Lei's heart jolted, and he immediately forced himself to calm down.

"There's no need to get even with him immediately. We should first continue on with the idea we decided upon and confirm the spot in the top ten. After the tournament, you can always challenge him to a [Master Teacher Confrontation], or even a... [Life-and-Death Battle]!"

Elder Zhou harrumphed. "By then, he will be in your palms, and you will be able to do whatever you want with him. Even if you were to tear him into pieces, there would be no one to stop you!"

"This..." Qin Lei hesitated for a moment before gritting his teeth in savagery. "Alright, I'll challenge him to a Life-and-Death Duel after the tournament. If I don't kill him, I won't be called Qin Lei!"

...

"Hmm? He actually didn't chase me?"

After a moment, Ruohuan gongzi turned around and saw that no one was behind him. At this moment, he suddenly recalled what Zhang shi said. "Is this a... supernatural occurrence?"

Chapter 592

Beguiling (1)

Even though he didn't know whether it was a supernatural occurrence or not, one thing was for sure-Zhang shi's judgement was spot-on. For this, he was extremely awed with the other party's foresight.

In the past, he had been reveling in his position as the number one genius of Myriad Kingdom Alliance, and he thought that there was no one in the world who could best him. But after seeing this young man, he realized that he was still far from matching up to true geniuses.

Returning back to the group, Ruohuan gongzi respectfully clasped his fist and asked, "Zhang shi, what do I do now?"

"Sit down and eat!"

Zhang Xuan gestured.

Ruohuan gongzi was dumbstruck.

You got me to pour meat soup over the other party to provoke him; going to such an extent, I thought that you would have some incredible plan in mind, and yet... you're asking me to eat now?

"Your match is about to start, and you'll only have the strength to fight once you're full. Without energy, how do you expect to emerge victorious against your opponent?" Zhang Xuan rolled his eyes.

There was only an hour of resting time, and it was about to come to an end. If he didn't hurry, the tournament was going to resume.

"Alright!"

With no other better idea in mind, Ruohuan gongzi could only follow the other party's instruction. He sat down and began to eat ravenously.

The dinner prepared by the Alliance Head Residence was indeed sumptuous. Soon, they were full, and by then, the tournament was already about to start.

"Memorize the contents on it. You just have to recite it later on!"

Just as Ruohuan gongzi was still perplexed as to how he should deal with Qin Lei, Zhang shi passed a piece of white paper to him. It was filled with scribbles that were written by the other party during the meal just a moment ago.

Surprised, he quickly swept through the contents of the paper, and his eyes immediately widened. "Zhang shi, do I really have to say... this?"

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded affirmatively.

Ruohuan gongzi's vision immediately darkened, and he nearly broke down in tears.

Big Brother, you are pushing me off a cliff here! Are you that unhappy that I wasn't beaten up just now?

If I were to say what is on the paper, that fellow would probably forfeit his candidature just so that he could strangle me to death.

"Stop wasting time idling and quickly memorize it. Remember, you must recite it word-for-word. Otherwise, I can't guarantee your victory!"

Seeing Ruohuan gongzi wallowing in his sorrow, Zhang shi urged him with a frown.

Tears glittered in Ruohuan gongzi's eyes.

If only he'd known earlier, he would have never asked Zhang Xuan for help. At this moment, it felt as though he was onboard the ship of a pirate, and there was no backing out now.

"Alright!"

Gritting his teeth, Ruohuan gongzi quickly started memorizing the contents on the paper. Soon after he was done, a gong sounded, and Hong shi's deep voice reverberated through the entire square. "The tournament resumes. Would the participating master teachers come onto the stage?"

Everyone replied and hurried up.

On the round stage, Ruohuan gongzi took a deep breath before walking over to the dueling stage labeled A.

For a moment, his silhouette looked slightly valiant.

Knowing that it was too late for second thoughts, he had decided to simply follow Zhang shi's instructions. If death was what that awaited him, so be it!

"Humph!"

Qin Lei also walked toward dueling stage A as well. Recalling how the other party provoked him previously, his rage immediately surged.

Seeing that all participants were on their respective stages, Hong shi announced, "The match begins. Start discussing the format of the duel!"

"Since White Helios Sect was first place in the previous tournament, the right of choice is in my hands!"

Harrumphing coldly, Qin Lei turned at the detestable young man before him and said, "I choose... comprehension of cultivation!"

"Ah?"

Hearing that everything had gone as predicted, Ruohuan gongzi was momentarily stumped.

"Why? You dare not accept my challenge?" A light flickered across Qin Lei's eyes.

"What do I have to fear? Comprehension of cultivation, is it? So be it then! What are the rules?" Ruohuan gongzi replied.

"Good!"

He thought that the other party would reject his proposal, but the other party accepted it candidly instead. Heaving a sigh of relief, Qin Lei explained, "Simple. We'll both execute a battle technique, and each of us will point out the flaws in it. Whoever points out more flaws will be the winner!"

"Un!" Ruohuan gongzi nodded.

...

"It went exactly as your analysis predicted!"

Seeing the sight, Pavilion Master Kang and the others turned to look at Zhao Feiwu.

Even though this lady wasn't a master teacher, her wisdom was indeed impressive.

"Un. All that is left is to see whether the note Zhang shi gave him is effective or not!"

Zhao Feiwu chuckled lightly.

The most she could do was to deduce the content of the competition. Whether Ruohuan gongzi would be able to emerge victorious or not would depend on the content of the note that Zhang shi passed to him.

"Un!" The group nodded their heads.

While they were speaking, the duo on the stage were already done executing their battle techniques.

After having seen the entire set of movements from Qin Lei, Ruohuan gongzi was completely stumped.

He had never heard of the other party's fist art before, needless to say, seen it... How in the world was he supposed to point out any flaws?

"Going by the rules, I'll go first!"

Seeing the confusion on the other party's face, Qin Lei sneered coldly. "If I'm not mistaken, the fist art that Ruohuan gongzi executed is a Spirit intermediate-tier battle technique known as 'Seven Forsaken Fists'. It's indeed a formidable technique, but it's a pity that your mastery is still lacking... I could see a total of four flaws!

"First, having barely reached Transcendent Mortal 4-dan, your zhenqi isn't sufficiently pure yet. Even though your movements seem to be in place, you're lacking the essence of the technique...

"Second, the core of the Seven Forsaken Fist is forsaken heart, forsaken emotions, forsaken intent, forsaken benevolence, forsaken fate, forsaken thoughts, and forsaken desires. However, you aren't able to meet even a single one of these notions. Given that your movements and your intent are at odds, no matter how much you practice the technique, it will be nothing more than an empty shell!

"Third...

"Fourth..."

Soon, Qin Lei finished listing out the flaws in Ruohuan gongzi's technique. Every single point of his stabbed straight into the vitals. There was no one who wouldn't lose his confidence upon hearing too much of such words.

"Incredible!"

"With just a single look, he was able to point out the four main flaws behind the technique. As expected of one of the strongest contenders for the champion seat, he's indeed fearsome!"

"I was looking intently at Ruohuan gongzi's movements too, but I wasn't able to see a single problem about it..."

...

Upon hearing Qin Lei's words, a huge commotion raked up among the crowd below.

Nearly everyone present here was a master teacher or an expert, and they possessed a sharp eye of such things as well. The technique Ruohuan gongzi executed felt wholesome, and with just a single look, it was clear that he had devoted many years of his time into it...

But even so, Qin Lei was still able to easily list out four major problems. His eye of discernment wasn't inferior to even some half 5-star master teachers.

"Seems like it'll be hard for Ruohuan gongzi to win in this round!"

"Un. I had been paying close attention to Qin Lei's execution, but I wasn't even able to tell what battle technique he was executing!"

"I am also unable to make sense out of it..."

Everyone discussed with hushed voices as they looked toward the stage, curious as to how Ruohuan gongzi would deal with this situation.

With a cold smirk on his face, Qin Lei was also staring at Ruohuan gongzi intently.

The battle technique he had just executed had come from some ancient ruins. Even Hong shi might not be able to recognize it, needless to say this fellow.

Thus, he was confident that he would win this match.

"It's your turn. If you can't say anything constructive, you should just admit defeat!"

Seeing the conflicted expression on Ruohuan gongzi, Qin Lei harrumphed.

"This..."

At this moment, Ruohuan gongzi seemed to have come to a major decision and gritted his teeth. "If I'm not mistaken, there's something wrong... with your brain!"

"What?"

The square fell deathly silent instantaneously.

Wasn't it a duel in pointing out flaws in battle techniques? When did it become an insulting competition instead?

"What did you say?"

Hearing those words, Qin Lei immediately exploded in rage.

"Despite not having completed nourishing your soul, you forcefully tried to achieve a breakthrough to Consonant Spirit realm and drove your zhenqi into your head. And in that attempt, both your soul and your brain are wounded. Am I mistaken about that?" Ruohuan gongzi said.

"This..."

Qin Lei frowned.

After Sect Leader Bai Kaizhi, who was also his teacher, was killed, he understood the bad state the sect was in and panicked. Thus, he forcefully tried to advance to Consonant Spirit realm.

In that process, one's zhenqi had to be driven into one's head to open up the Heling acupoint. Only with the opening with this acupoint can one make the leap to become a Consonant Spirit realm expert... But Qin Lei wasn't ready yet then. The head was a vulnerable region, and yet, he willfully drove his zhenqi into his, thus causing significant damage to his soul and brain. As a result, he was suffering from splitting headache whenever night falls.

But he had never told this matter to anyone, even the elders of the sect for fear of worrying them. How did the other party manage to see through this?

"Not only so, there are innumerable traumas from cultivating incorrectly all over your body. For the sake of impressing others in this tournament, you even cultivated a battle technique of unknown origin... If I'm not mistaken, to master it, you would need thirty-two acupoints all over your body to resonate in harmony, right?

"This requirement in itself isn't a problem; most battle techniques have such demands from the cultivator. However, this battle technique sought to connect the Baihe and the Yongquan acupoints. The former pulls in the clear aura of the sky whereas the latter absorbs the turbid aura of the earth. As the two of them collide, an intangible cage is formed, locking your soul firmly into your body!

"In other words, without any fortuitous encounter, it's impossible for you to reach Consonant Spirit realm! If you don't believe my words, you can try driving your zhenqi into your Bihai acupoint. If you feel a numbing sensation there, it means that your soul has already started declining. Alternatively, you can also try your Qinzhen acupoint. If you feel an itch, it means that the internal of your body has grown oddly stiff, and it is nothing more than a cage at this point...

"Other people cultivate in hopes of advancing to higher realms, and yet, you do so only to seal your path of progress... Isn't there something really wrong with your head?"

Since Ruohuan gongzi had already made up his mind, he tossed aside his hesitation and recited everything that Zhang shi had him say.

In any case, he couldn't understand the other party's battle technique. At this rate, he

would lose anyway. Thus, he decided to take the gamble; at the very least, there was a ray of hope down this path.

After he was done, he thought the other party would immediately rush forward to pummel him up or insult him. But shockingly, the other party remained bizarrely motionless. It was as if he had met with something incredulous, leaving his face pale with shock.

'Could it be that... I was spot-on?'

Gedeng! Ruohuan gongzi's heart skipped a beat.

When he saw the content of the note, he thought that it was just nonsense Zhang shi made up on the spot. If he were to recite it, the other party would surely rush up to kill him... Never had he entertained the thought that it would actually be true. The other party had barely raised his hands back then, and Zhang shi was able to tell all of this?

"Of course, if you don't believe me... you can continue trying for Consonant Spirit realm. You'll feel a surge of powerlessness, or perhaps, your zhenqi, suppressed by some sort of power, might even be unable to enter your head."

Ruohuan gongzi's eyes lit up, and endless confidence seemed to surge into him at this instant. Ignoring the other party's shocked expression, he continued, "Despite being a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, you cultivated a battle technique blindly without analyzing its true nature, and yet, you still dare to challenge me to a comprehension of cultivation duel... How much more arrogant can you get?"

Qin Lei's body swayed weakly as though it had lost its backbone.

He had just tried out everything that the other party had said, and it turned out that the other party was completely spot-on... Could it be that he had really cultivated incorrectly?

To err so greatly despite being a master teacher, how was he supposed to guide others then? This wasn't only a loss in this duel, this was a loss for him as a master teacher as well.

"Alright, I'll stop here... As a fellow master teacher, I can tell you this. There's still a way to resolve your problem at this point, but the longer you delay it, the harder it'll be for

you to make a full recovery..."

Ruohuan gongzi waved his hands. "I'm a magnanimous person, so as long as you admit your defeat, I'll impart you the solution to your problem."

Chapter 593

Beguiling (2)

Beneath the stage...

"Zhang shi, this is what that was on your note... You managed to discern this much?"

Pavilion Master Kang and the others stared at the young man before them with widened eyes.

He was well aware of his own student's capability.

He couldn't even tell what battle technique Qin Lei executed previously, and yet, his disciple was able to logically deduce facts that left the entire crowd stumped. Unless Zhang shi was involved, there was no way his disciple could be capable of this.

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan admitted.

"But... Qin shi had only driven his zhenqi and lifted his palm, how in the world were you able to discern so much?" Even after hearing the words of affirmation from the person in question, the crowd still found the matter too difficult to believe.

Ruohuan gongzi did manage to provoke Qin Lei by pouring meat soup on him, but in the end, a fight didn't break out, and both sides hardly made any moves... Yet, to make such an in-depth analysis under such circumstances, are you for real?

What kind of eye of discernment is this?

"But... what kind of battle technique did Qin Lei cultivate? To think that there would actually be a battle technique in the world that would lock one's soul and prevent one from achieving a breakthrough!" Su shi couldn't help but express his shock.

A 4-star pinnacle master teacher possessed astute senses surpassing that of ordinary cultivators. How could Qin Lei possibly cultivate a battle technique that would seal his soul without realizing it himself?

"I've no idea as well..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"You don't know? Then..." Everyone frowned.

If you don't know what battle technique it is, how do you know what kind of sensation would be induced by stimulating the respective acupoints?

The Bihai acupoint corresponds to the soul whereas the Qinzhen acupoint is the point connecting the body to the soul.

These were common facts that all Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle experts know of. Under normal circumstances, the triggering of these acupoints with zhenqi should nourish one's souls... Given that such anomalies happened, it would be hard to believe that there was nothing wrong with the other party.

But... if you don't even know what battle technique the other party cultivated, how in the world do you know that his Qinzhen acupoint is closed and his soul is wounded?

"It's a lie!" Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

"A lie?" Everyone froze.

"The cultivators of the White Helios Sect cultivates the White Helios zhenqi, which is a type of zhenqi possessing yang attribute. Back then, when Bai Kaizhi came to attack my residence, my teacher told me about it!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Un..." Pavilion Master Kang and the others nodded their heads.

The White Helios Formula that most members in the White Helios Sect cultivated was indeed a yang attribute cultivation technique. Upon mastering it, one's attacks would be augmented with immense destructive force.

Having suffered a tragic defeat against them, they went to investigate the other party, so they were well aware of the basic information surrounding them.

"The food provided by the Alliance Head Residence consists mainly of food that seeks to revitalize, such as spirit beast meat and medicinal herbs. Am I right about that?" Zhang Xuan asked.

In truth, the Alliance Head Residence also provided the same food to the members of

the other sects and empires as well.

Spirit beast meat, savage beast meat, and even precious medicinal herbs rich in spiritual energy were used in the cooking so as to nourish and energize the exhausted participants.

"That's right!" Zhao Feiwu nodded her head.

She was involved in the choosing of the ingredients for the food, so she was well aware of this matter.

"What would happen if a cultivator practicing a yang attribute cultivation technique consumes extremely nourishing food?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"His cells will become lively, and his flow of zhenqi would hasten..." Pavilion Master Kang replied.

It had a similar effect to consuming stimulant. After all, if a person rich in 'hot energy' were to consume nourishing food, his body would surely be overflowing with energy, resulting in physical restlessness.

Just that... wouldn't that simply put him in a better condition for battle?

"Under normal circumstances, it would only induce positive effects to the cultivator. However, you've neglected an ingredient used in the brewing of the soup. If I'm not mistaken, there is 'Jade Yin Grass'," Zhang Xuan said.

"There's indeed Jade Yin Grass. Even though that grass is known for its cold yin properties, it has the effect of cooling one down and boosting one's cognitive capacity. On top of that, it is a famous delicacy as well..."

Halfway through her words, Zhao Feiwu suddenly realized something, and her eyes widened.

"It's indeed a famous medicinal herb, but the problem lies exactly with its cold yin properties. Given that we are still in the midst of the tournament, Qin Lei is likely to be filled with excitement. On top of that, his yang zhenqi and the nourishing food he had consumed left him practically brimming with energy... And at such a moment, a soup containing yin energy was poured over him. I believe even if I don't explain this, you should understand the consequences of the matter!" Zhang Xuan smiled.

"The abrupt collision of yin and yang; to protect itself, the body would automatically shut its acupoint... If all of his acupoints are closed, that explains why his soul is locked in his body... Y-you actually designed this senario?"

Coming to a realization, the faces of Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and the others paled in frenzy.

They thought that Zhang shi had incredible capability to be able to analyze so much regarding Qin Lei; they didn't expect that it was all a huge ploy set up to trap Qin Lei from the initial pouring of the soup.

Not only was each chain of the plan linked tightly to the next, leaving little room for failure, there was also very little evidence to trace back the matter. If Zhang shi hadn't explained the matter, they would have probably never realized it. As the person standing in the center of everything, Qin Lei was unlikely to be any wiser than them... His loss was already fixed from the moment Zhang shi's help was engaged!

This was... way too formidable!

"I just happened to think of it!" Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

In truth, the entire plan lay upon a single fact-Qin Lei had attempted to achieve a breakthrough to Consonant Spirit realm and failed, causing his soul to be damaged. Without this laying the foundation for all the latter theories, it would be impossible to convince the other party of this hoax.

This was how humans worked, as well as a common ploy used by fortune tellers. With a single fact to set the foundation, the parts that came afterward would seem much more believable.

Not to mention, it was based on solid theories known by all 4-star pinnacle master teachers. On the contrary, it would be hard for him not to believe those words instead.

"Since it's a lie, then... Ruohuan said that he has a solution..."

Suddenly, Pavilion Master Kang recalled what Ruohuan gongzi had just said, and a premonition suddenly struck him.

If this was all a lie, what kind of solution could Ruohuan gongzi offer?

"Just watch on..."

Zhang Xuan gestured to the stage.

The group hurriedly turned their sights over.

At this moment, Qin Lei, after a long internal struggle, sighed deeply and said, "I admit my defeat. I beseech you to impart me the solution to my problem!"

He was already in the top sixteen. Even if he were to fail now, he could still vie for the last two placing of the top ten.

But if his problem wasn't resolved, his cultivation would be unable to advance any further. Just the thought of it was completely unacceptable to him.

Weighing the pros and cons, he decided to admit defeat and accept the other party's guidance.

In any case, it was just a matter of time before he killed this fellow. What harm was there to give a little glee to a dying man?

"Admit defeat? Qin shi actually admitted defeat?"

"It seems like Ruohuan gongzi's words were spot-on!"

"Impressive! We weren't even able to recognize the battle technique and yet he had managed to see through even the flaws in Qin shi's cultivation. When did Ruohuan gongzi become so impressive?"

"I think I saw him consulting Zhang shi just a moment ago. Do you think that it's possible that this is all Zhang shi's doing?"

...

Qin Lei admitting defeat was huge news that generated an enormous uproar amongst the crowd.

One must know that there was a huge disparity in the capability between Ruohuan gongzi and Qin Lei. This huge reversal had sparked thoughts in the minds of many.

Many of them had seen Ruohuan gongzi seeking Zhang shi's pointers during the break previously.

"Since you've admitted defeat, I'll help you then!"

Hearing the other party admit his defeat, Ruohuan gongzi began trembling in agitation, knowing that he had gotten into the top eight. "Actually, the solution is simple. Your Qinzhen acupoint is only sealed temporarily due to some external stimulus. As long as you rest well tonight, you'll be fine tomorrow..."

"Rest well tonight?"

Qin Lei widened his eyes in shock. His vision went dark, and a mini explosion occurred in his head.

If he still couldn't tell that he had been played a fool, he would be unbecoming as a 4-star pinnacle master teacher.

"I'll kill you..."

Howling furiously, he prepared to charge over angrily.

"Alright, a loss is a loss. On top of knowledge and physical strength, the Master Teacher Tournament also seeks to assess one's adaptability. It's due to your own ignorance that you were deceived, you shouldn't pin the blame on anyone else!"

Hong shi flicked his sleeves, and Qin Lei immediately stopped with a stagger.

Given that Qin Lei had willingly admitted defeat after being duped, there was no one he could blame for it.

"I..."

Since even Hong shi was speaking up, Qin Lei knew that there was nothing else he could do at this point. His teeth bit tightly on his lips out of rage, and fresh blood regurgitated at the back of his throat, threatening to spill at any moment.

What the heck was this. He had marched onto the stage so confidently, only to be fooled by someone else... and not to mention, he actually willingly admitted defeat!

Damn it... Jun Ruohuan, if I can't kill you, I'll abandon my name!

Qin Lei howled furiously inside.

...

The results were out, Ruohuan gongzi had successfully advanced to the next round. As soon as he got off the stage, he immediately turned to look at Zhang shi in agitation.

In truth, when he first read the content on the paper, he thought that he would surely be beaten to death. He never thought that he would actually succeed!

Top eight of the Master Teacher Tournament... This was a result he never thought would be possible!

"Thank you, Zhang shi!"

He clasped his fist respectfully.

It was still a while ago that he still tried to compete with this young man over everything. But at this point, such a notion vanished completely from his mind.

This fellow may seem a little dense on the surface, but if one were to try to compete with him, one would only end up utterly defeated.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony. Given how badly Qin shi was scammed, he will surely apply for a Life-and-Death Duel against you. For now, you should think of how you would face him first!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Un!" Ruohuan gongzi nodded in response.

If two master teachers had an irreconcilable grudge, they could apply for a Life-and-Death Duel to resolve the matter once and for all.

Given how badly Qin Lei was humiliated before such a huge crowd, there was a good chance that he would apply for one right after the tournament. If the headquarters were to give their consent, Ruohuan gongzi would have to face him.

But still, the headquarters rarely consented to Life-and-Death Duels unless in extreme situations. And even if it did, Ruohuan gongzi wouldn't necessarily lose to the other

party.

In truth, the paper that Zhang shi gave him contained major flaws on the other party's cultivation and battle techniques, and he had already memorized them all. As such, it was impossible to tell who would be the one destroyed in a Life-and-Death Duel.

Putting aside the matter, Ruohuan gongzi warned with a grave expression, "Zhang shi, your opponent for this round is Wei Changqing of the Zijin Sect. I've heard that this fellow is extremely formidable, so you must be careful later on!"

The lots were only drawn at the initial phase, and the matching would follow by a certain fixed format afterward. The person Zhang shi would face was Wei Changqing, a formidable genius of the Zijin Sect.

"You've heard of him?" Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

"Even though he's not in the top ten of the list of contenders, it doesn't mean that he's incapable... His greatest flaw is only his lacking cultivation; just like you, he's a Transcendent Mortal 3-dan pinnacle cultivator! To be able to get into the top sixteen despite his lacking cultivation, I'm sure you can imagine how talented he is in other aspects!"

Ruohuan gongzi's eyebrows shot up. "I spectated his previous match, and he used his supporting occupation as a blacksmith to force his opponent to admit his defeat!"

"Un!"

Zhang Xuan nodded.

He had seen the match too, and honestly speaking, that fellow was indeed impressive.

Without true capability, it was nigh impossible for a Transcendent Mortal 3-dan pinnacle to triumph over a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan in smithing.

As smithing wasn't one of Zhang Xuan's supporting occupations, it would be impossible for the other party to challenge him in this field... But if the other party were to challenge him in a duel of pill forging... that may prove to be a little troublesome.

Chapter 594

Duel of Beast Taming

While he was a 4-star apothecary, he had only gotten his emblem through Pill Discourse. Pill forging was still impossible for him!

In a match of pill forging, Zhang shi, being unable to forge anything at all, would surely lose tragically.

But still, given that pill forging required significant preparation, it was unlikely to appear in the Master Teacher Tournament.

"In any case, you just have to know that he is impressive in his supporting occupations, and you shouldn't accept any duel of that sort!" Ruohuan gongzi advised.

Wei Changqing's cultivation was lacking, but he excelled in his supporting occupations. Knowing this, Zhang Xuan could use his right to reject a proposed dueling format once to vie for better conditions for himself.

While the Myriad Kingdom Alliance group was discussing this issue, an air of desolation seemed to be floating around the group from Zijin Sect.

"That Zhang shi has been barging his way through every single obstacle with astounding means. I fear that there's very little hope for you!" an elder from Zijin Sect lamented with a deep frown etched on his forehead.

"That monster seems to possess no weakness at all, how are we supposed to compete with him?"

No one here thought well of their own participant.

If it was anyone else, even if the person was Luo Xuan, they would surely give it their all. But against that freak, they simply couldn't see any hope at all, and a wave of helplessness overwhelmed them.

"I can't help but admit that he's nearly flawless as a master teacher too, but I find it

hard to believe that his astounding capabilities... could extend to his supporting occupations too!" Wei Changqing narrowed his eyes.

He specialized in his supporting occupations, and he had absolute confidence in that field.

"I've had someone look into it, and his four main supporting occupations are namely 5-star appraiser, 4-star formation master, 4-star physician, and 4-star beast tamer!"

Wei Changqing lifted up his fingers and counted, "My four supporting occupations are 4-star blacksmith, 4-star tea master, 4-star painter, and 4-star beast tamer! The only common supporting occupation we have is beast taming, but this is more than sufficient!"

"More than sufficient? It can't be that you intend to challenge him in beast taming?" The elders of the sect glanced at one another. "Beast taming is an extremely troublesome process..."

If one wished to compete in the field of supporting occupation, both competitors must share the same supporting occupation. Otherwise, if only one side was learned in the field, there would be no point to the duel at all.

While Zhang Xuan did have other supporting occupations such as apothecary and painter, they hadn't reached 4-star yet. As such, the only viable option was beast taming.

Unaware of the rules, Zhang Xuan was still worrying over the latter challenging him to a duel of pill forging.

However, beast taming required one to be close to a spirit beast, and sometimes, this process could take several years...

On the other hand, the duel for the Master Teacher Tournament had to be completed within an incense's time.

There was a clear lack of time for this!

"Don't worry, I've an idea in mind. In the field of beast taming, I'll never lose out to him!" A gleam flashed across Wei Changqing's eyes.

"It's good that you're confident, but make sure not to force yourself..."

"Indeed. Even if you were to lose, do be polite to the other party. We'll make sure to reward you greatly when we return back to our sect!"

"Otherwise, you might as well admit defeat now. Our sect will at least be able to retain its pride..."

None of the elders had much faith in him.

"..." Wei Changqing's eyes twitched uncontrollably.

Are you on my side or Zhang Xuan's side?

It's one thing for you not to support me, but to actually advise me to admit defeat... Just the thought of it left him speechless!

'Humph, Zhang Xuan. I'll defeat you so as to shut these old fogeys up!'

Gritting his teeth, Wei Changqing howled frenziedly within.

Clenching his fists tightly, he proceeded to the stage.

This match was no longer about the top ten placing anymore, what was at stake was... his dignity.

If he wished to retain his dignity, he would have to defeat Zhang Shi and prove his capability!

...

On the stage labeled D, looking at the young man opposite to him, Wei Changqing gritted his teeth tightly.

Seeing the other party's hostile gesture, Zhang Xuan was stumped.

It should be his first time meeting the other party, why did the other party look as though he had killed his father and claimed his wife?

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan tried asking, "Have we met before?"

"We have never met before! But I'm determined to defeat you!" Wei Changqing declared furiously. "I decide to challenge you to a duel in our supporting occupation, that is... beast taming! Do you dare to accept the duel?"

"Beast taming?" Not expecting the other party to propose such a dueling format, Zhang Xuan frowned. "How would this match go?"

"Simple. Since you're a 4-star beast tamer, you would surely have your own tamed beast. Why don't we call our tamed beasts over, and we'll give one another an incense's time to interact with each other's tamed beast. Whoever commands the greater degree of loyalty from the other party's tamed beast will be deemed the winner!" Wei Changqing said.

"Exchange tamed beasts to tame for an incense's time... Are you certain about it?" Zhang Xuan looked at the other party with a bizarre expression.

The other party's intent was clear-I'll tame your tamed beast while you tame mine; whoever manages to induce more loyalty from the other party's tamed beast will be the victor.

This was a common competition format between beast tamers.

Just that... this fellow really wanted to compete with him in beast taming?

"Of course!"

Wei Changqing sneered coldly. "Why? To think that the most popular contender for the champion seat would actually fear my beast taming ability? Are you that fearful of me?"

"Alright then!"

Seeing that the other party was serious in his proposed duel format, Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

...

"Compete with Zhang shi in beast taming? Is that fellow... mad?"

Hearing the content of the duel, Zhao Feiwu stared at the fool with a gaze brimming

with sympathy.

You must be unaware that Zhang shi only took two breaths to tame the Demon Cinque Beast. To actually challenge him to this... Are you that desperate to find some excitement in your dull life?

I've seen people with suicidal tendencies, but you seem to top the list...

The mouths of Pavilion Master Kang and the others twitched.

Even though they had never witnessed Zhang shi taming a beast, they had heard of it from Hall Master Han Chong of the Beast Hall personally on the day of the selection round.

A spirit beast which even he was unable to tame despite years of effort, Zhang shi actually managed to turn it into a loyal guard for his residence. Are you certain that you can win?

...

"Seems like this will be an interesting match to watch. Wei Changqing is a famous genius beast tamer, and I've heard that he has once participated in a beast taming competition and became the champion!"

"I've heard of the same as well. Zhang shi really shouldn't have accepted this challenge. Unlike the other duels, a duel of beast taming won't be just about one's own capability. One would have to possess sufficient resources in one's possession as well!"

"It might be hard for him to advance to the top eight..."

...

Contrary to Zhao Feiwu and the group's sympathetic expression, the other master teachers, ignorant of Zhang Xuan's astounding feats, had a grave expression on their faces.

Beast taming is an expensive occupation which demands one to have sufficient treasures in one's possession.

Otherwise, if one couldn't even attract the spirit beast's attention, how could one

possibly induce loyalty in the latter?

The Myriad Kingdom Alliance was clearly much poorer than the Zijin Sect; in terms of beast taming, the latter was in an advantageous position.

"Look, the both of them have summoned their tamed beasts over!"

Amidst discussions from the crowd, a huge gust of wind suddenly blew in the air above them. Two gigantic spirit beasts flew over and landed on the stage.

They were Demon Cinque Beast and Wei Changqing's tamed beast.

Zhang Xuan glanced over.

The other party's tamed beast was a gigantic Beryline Spirit Beast. It was at Transcendent Mortal 4-dan primary stage-far weaker than Demon Cinque Beast.

"This is your tamed beast?"

Wei Changqing had thought that the other party's tamed beast would be around the same cultivation realm as his, and he was confident in winning significant loyalty from it. Who knew that the other party's tamed beast would turn out to be so powerful? Wei Changqing's face immediately collapsed, and tears brimmed in his eyes.

It would be amazing if a normal Transcendent Mortal 3-dan pinnacle expert could tame a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan spirit beast... and yet, you actually tamed a Consonant Spirit realm fellow? How in the world did you do it?

"Feel free to go first. I'm in no hurry!"

Zhang Xuan gestured. After which, he turned to Demon Cinque Beast and said, "Wei shi over here hopes to tame you, so do cooperate with him!"

"Roar?"

Demon Cinque Beast was stunned for a moment. It twisted its gigantic head to the young man not too far away, and in an instant, the young man felt a huge pressure on his soul. It was as if his soul was placed into a furnace which would burn him into cinders.

"I..."

Feeling the immense pressure on him, Wei Changqing's mouth twitched. His body couldn't help but shudder, and he nearly spurted blood.

This... If I can't even get near to it, how in the world can I tame it?

Flicking his wrist, Wei Changqing took out a jade bottle and said, "Brother Demon Cinque, this is the blood essence of a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan spirit beast that I prepared for you. May I know if you would be interested in it?"

Prying the jade bottle open, a dense concentration of spiritual energy immediately surged into the surrounding.

Blood essence of a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan spirit beast!

"What a generous offer!"

"Indeed! This single bottle is probably worth a minimum of a dozen middle-tier spirit stones!"

"You're giving a very conservative estimate; chances are it would be much higher than that. There's no spirit beast who wouldn't be tempted by that. Zhang shi is really in trouble this time round!"

"Seems like Wei Changqing came prepared..."

Seeing the generous offer, a huge commotion broke out below.

The blood essence of a stronger spirit beast posed irresistible attraction to a weaker spirit beast. There were countless spirit beasts who would submit before such a treasure.

It was no wonder Wei Changqing dared to challenge Zhang shi to such a duel. It seemed like he came prepared.

If Zhang shi couldn't offer anything more valuable than that, he would surely lose this match.

"Roar!"

Seeing the Transcendent Mortal 5-dan spirit beast blood essence, Demon Cinque Beast's eyes lit up. It immediately lifted its thick claws and snatched the jade bottle over.

"Ah?"

Not expecting the other party to simply snatch the blood essence over, Wei Changqing panicked, "There's no need to hurry. As long as you promise to become my friend, I'll give it to you... Y-you... What are you doing? The heck!"

He thought that he would surely win the other party's goodwill with the spirit beast blood essence in hand. Who knew that before a shadow would come crashing down on him before he was done speaking. Before he realized it, he was already beneath the other party's claws.

"You... return my spirit beast blood essence..." Wei Changqing roared furiously, but before he was done with his words, he felt the force of the claw pressing down on him intensifying.

Putong!

An indentation appeared on the stage, and Wei Changqing was pushed into the ground.

"I..."

Wei Changqing was on the verge of tears.

No matter what, he was a 4-star master teacher, as well as a respected beast tamer. To be smashed into the ground by a spirit beast... The stifled feeling in his heart left him extremely frustrated and frenzied.

"Listen to me... As long as you let me go, I have better things to offer you... Pu!"

But just like before, the pressure pushing down on him was hiked up yet another notch before he was done speaking. Snap! His ribcage creaked, and a mouthful of fresh blood spurted from his mouth.

In the next instant, he suddenly felt an ache on his finger-his storage ring had been taken away by the gigantic spirit beast on top of him.

"You..."

Wei Changqing was about to go insane.

No matter what, you're a Consonant Spirit realm spirit beast, and you already possess some degree of intelligence. Shouldn't you try to uphold your dignity rather than snatch whatever you want as though a willful child?

While he was spewing blood, he heard the Demon Cinque Beast above him howl. Following which, with a tinge of peculiarity, Zhang Shi's voice sounded, "My Demon Cinque Beast says that... as long as you submit to it and become its tamed human, it will return your storage ring to you..."

"Submit? Tamed human? Pu!"

Wei Changqing's vision went dark.

Big Brother, I'm here to tame your spirit beast, not to have your spirit beast tame me...

Chapter 595

What Are You Feigning Death For?

Back on Coax Ridge, the Demon Cinque Beast had been a bandit of the region. Even the Alliance Head Residence and the Beast Hall were unable to do anything about it. Those who dared challenge it were either killed or pummeled and thrown to some remote corner of the world.

Yet, this fellow actually dared to try and tame it. He could be considered lucky to have survived until now!

Roar!

Waving the spirit beast blood essence and storage ring with its claws, Demon Cinque Beast roared once more.

"Cough cough!"

Zhang Xuan coughed before translating sheepishly, "It wants you to drink the spirit beast blood essence..."

As Demon Cinque Beast was his tamed beast, he could communicate with it directly through his soul even if he didn't comprehend beast language. It wasn't too difficult for him to understand such simple expressions of the other party.

"Drinking the blood essence of a spirit beast..." Wei Changqing burst into tears.

Spirit beast blood essence was only effective against spirit beasts! If a human were to drink it, not only would it be ineffective, he might even find scales or hair growing all over him, as though a monster... or in the worst-case scenario, it might even spell death!

After all, not everyone possessed Heaven's Path zhenqi to neutralize the violent energy contained within the blood essence.

Roar!

Seeing no movements from the person under it, Demon Cinque Beast roared once more as it opened the jade bottle and tried to stuff it in the other party's mouth.

"Zhang shi, save me! I-I won't try to tame it anymore..."

Wei Changqing's face immediately paled in fright, and his soul nearly drifted out of his body.

Judging from the other party's vigorous actions, it seemed as though the Demon Cinque Beast wanted him to eat the jade bottle on top of the spirit beast blood essence. If he didn't beg for mercy now, he would be dead soon.

What the heck is this?

He confidently declared that he would tame the other party's spirit beast, but... this huge fellow simply refused to follow conventions.

There was no spirit beast, even tamed ones, who could resist the allure of Consonant Spirit realm spirit beast blood essence. Upon sight, they would immediately fawn on him in hopes of obtaining it. Yet, this huge fellow thought of it as trash, and even tried to feed it to him...

Will you be glad only after I'm dead?

To think that a 4-star beast tamer would end up crushed under a spirit beast and be tamed by the latter instead, what in the world was this...

Seeing that Wei Changqing would really die if this were to go on, Zhang Xuan reprimanded, "Alright Demon Cinque, that's enough!"

"Roar!"

With a disappointed look, Demon Cinque lifted its claws and walked over to the side of the stage. As for the storage ring and the jade bottle of spirit beast blood essence, it didn't seem like it had any intentions of returning them.

You must be jesting, these are my spoils of war. You want me to return them? Dream on!

"Cough cough!"

Spewing another two mouthfuls of blood, Wei Changqing struggled to his feet with a ghastly white face.

He hadn't even begun his taming when he was already left on the verge of death by a spirit beast. If word were to get out, he would be too ashamed to call himself a beast tamer... He would simply be mocked!

He hesitantly turned around to look at Demon Cinque Beast, hoping to get back his storage ring and spirit beast blood essence, only to meet the latter's glare instead. A shiver went down his spine.

How could he possibly get back his stuff like that? The other party's glare seemed to be saying, "It is already out of utmost benevolence on my part that you're still breathing now."

Tears streamed down Wei Changqing's face.

I am here to find prestige... Why does it seem like I'm only embarrassing myself here?

"It seems like you didn't obtain the slightest loyalty from my tamed beast... Is there any point pushing on with the duel?" Zhang Xuan asked.

The winner of the duel would be the one who managed to induce a higher Loyalty Level from the other party's tamed beast. Since Wei Changqing didn't obtain the slightest shred of loyalty from Demon Cinque Beast, he was already fated to lose. There wasn't any point in continuing with it.

"Of course we should go on. Beast taming hinges on luck; you might not fare any better than me. If you were to fail as well, it could end in a draw..."

Wei Changqing gritted his teeth as he spoke.

There wasn't much time left. Even though he wasn't able to tame Demon Cinque Beast, the other party might not be able to win the loyalty of the Beryline Spirit Beast.

It might just end in a draw!

At the very least, he would be able to retain some of his dignity this way.

"Are you certain?" Zhang Xuan asked the other party with a peculiar expression.

"Of course!"

Seeing the Zhang Xuan's expression, Wei Changqing thought that the other party was unconfident. Regaining his confidence, he sneered coldly, placed his hands behind his back, and turned to his tamed beast, "Beryline Spirit Beast, Zhang shi over here will be trying to tame you. As long as you stand your ground and get back at him for me, I'll give you whatever you want when we return home. I can even find a suitable Ancient Bloodline to induce a Bloodline Evolution for you..."

"Roar!"

Hearing its owner's promise, Beryline Spirit Beast's large eyes gleamed in determination as it hurriedly nodded its head.

"Shameless! How can one be so shameless!"

"Indeed. Zhang shi told Demon Cinque Beast to cooperate with him, and yet he actually told his tamed beast to not give in no matter what happens! How is Zhang shi supposed to tame the Beryline Spirit Beast like that?"

"That is cheating!"

"This is supposed to be a fair duel, and yet, he gave his tamed beast such orders. Does he have no dignity?"

...

Hearing Wei Changqing's words, a huge uproar broke out amidst the crowd below.

Zhang shi had told Demon Cinque Beast to cooperate with you. You were the one who lacked the capability to do so and ended up being beaten up instead!

And now that it is the other party's turn, you actually gave such orders to your tamed beast, even offering a huge incentive for it...

Do you have any pride?

Since this is a duel of beast taming, the conditions should at least be fair. What happened to the magnanimity a master teacher should possess?

"Embarrassing, how embarrassing!"

The various elders of the Zijin Sect clasped their faces. They didn't expect a genius of their sect to resort to such underhanded tricks.

What is this...

With this, even if they were to win the Master Teacher Tournament, they would be too ashamed to face anyone.

...

"I'll be starting then!"

Seeing that the other party hadn't given up yet, Zhang Xuan shook his head with a bitter smile before turning to look at Beryline Spirit Beast.

"Roar!"

Roaring furiously, Beryline Spirit Beast, like Demon Cinque Beast, tried to crush Zhang Xuan under its claws.

It had seen how its master had suffered under Demon Cinque Beast, and it intended to get back at Zhang shi for this.

However, it only possessed a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan primary stage. It couldn't pose any threat to Zhang Xuan at all.

With a sidestep, Zhang Xuan dodged the attack and retaliated with a slap.

Pah!

A resounding slap struck Beryline Spirit Beast's giant face. Before that giant fellow could react, it was already twirling in the air before being face-planted into the ground, leaving behind two gigantic, twitching feet exposed.

Zhang Xuan possessed the strength that rivalled even a Consonant Spirit realm intermediate stage expert, a might exceeding two million ding. Even a Spirit realm low-tier weapon would shatter before such immense might! If not for him holding back, Beryline Spirit Beast would already be crippled at this point.

Not to mention, the other party's movement was too fast for it to even perceive, let alone retaliate. Beryline Spirit Beast stood no chance against Zhang Xuan from the very start.

"What?"

"With a single slap, he actually face-planted a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan spirit beast?"

"How much strength does it take to achieve such a feat?"

Everyone was flabbergasted.

Spirit beasts were blessed with superior physiques. With their powerful might and formidable defense, human cultivators of the same cultivation realm were hardly a match for them. In other words, this Transcendent Mortal 4-dan primary stage Beryline Spirit Beast would be match for even a Transcendent Mortal advanced stage cultivator.

Yet, it was actually face-planted helplessly into the ground with a single slap... What kind of monstrous strength did Zhang shi possess?

Isn't that a little... way too fearsome?

Below the stage, the lips of Wu Tianhao, who had been recovered from the building and was currently spectating the duel, twitched in fright.

He thought that it was only a stroke of fortune that the other party managed to throw him off the stage. If he had been a bit more careful, he would not have lost. But at this moment, he realized that... it was a stroke of fortune that he was only thrown into the sky! If the other party had directed that slap at him then...

...his head might not have been attached to his neck right now...

"You said that he's weak in physical duels?" Wu Tianhao glanced at his friend. "I'll sever my friendship with you!"

"..." Wu Tianhao's friend.

...

"Wait a moment. While Zhang shi does have the upper hand in a physical duel, if he continues to beat Beryline Spirit Beast up like that... how can he win the other party's loyalty?"

"That's right!"

"If Zhang shi fails to induce the slightest bit of loyalty in Beryline Spirit beast, won't the duel end in a draw?"

"Damn it, Zhang shi should have been the winner. Once a draw occurs, things will get troublesome!"

After recovering from the shock, everyone came to a realization.

In a conventional beast taming process, one would take out alluring treasures that a spirit beast couldn't reject to win its goodwill.

On the contrary, beating up a spirit beast would only result in an irreconcilable grudge with it.

As a 4-star beast tamer, Zhang shi should of aware of this! Why did he lay his hands on Beryline Spirit Beast then? Not to mention... his blow was exceptionally heavy!

Such actions would only incur the resentment of Beryline Spirit Beast. Not only would he not win the Loyalty Level of it, he would even be hated.

"Haha, let's see what are you going to do now..."

Not expecting Zhang Xuan to be so reckless as to lay his hands on Beryline Spirit Beast, Wei Changqing nearly burst into laughter.

He had spent two entire years offering all kinds of treasures for the other party to choose, even hunting and sleeping with it before he managed to tame it.

Yet, this fellow actually sent such a heavy slap to it! Given Beryline Spirit Beast's proud nature, it would be a huge blessing if it didn't charge up to tear him apart.

To achieve a positive Loyalty Level under such a situation? Impossible!

Even though he failed to obtain the loyalty of Demon Cinque Beast, the other party

also failed with Beryline Spirit Beast. If so, it would be a draw!

In fact... in terms of good will, he might even be said to be the winner!

Dang!

Just as Wei Changqing was trembling with delight, a tong sounded-an incense's time was up.

An incense's time was only a rough gauge for the duration of a match, but even so, it meant that the competitors should start wrapping up to determine the winner.

Zhang Xuan didn't have any time to resort to any tricks anymore. It could be said that Wei Changqing was in a safe position already.

Humph!

Didn't you all say that I should admit my defeat, and that I would surely lose?

Look, I've managed to achieve a draw with even the strongest contender of the tournament. Let's see what else can you say...

The more he thought about it, the more excited he felt. Turning to the young man before him, he spoke proudly, "Zhang shi, since you failed to tame Beryline Spirit Beast and I failed to tame Demon Cinque Beast, why don't we call it a draw?"

"A draw?"

"Indeed. In fact, given how you laid your hands on Beryline Spirit Beast and incurred its resentment, it can be said that you've already lost in terms of good will..." Wei Changqing said.

You all spoke of magnanimity? Here it is!

It should have been clearly Zhang shi's loss, but I allowed him to go off with a draw...

"Resentment?"

Just as Wei Changqing was still immersed in his delight, the young man before him shook his head and kicked the gigantic legs twitching above the ground. "What are you

feigning death for? Hurry up and acknowledge your new master!"

Huala! Roar!

Following which, Beryline Spirit Beast hurriedly plucked itself out of the ground, rushed to Zhang shi excitedly, and knelt down. It cuddled up to Zhang shi with its head, as though a cute pug fawning over its master.

"What?"

Wei Changqing's body stiffened, and his eyes nearly fell to the ground.

How could this be?

Didn't the other party just beat it up? Why was it acknowledging the other party as its master now?

Can anyone tell me what in the world is going on?!

Chapter 596

Sword Duel

Wei Changqing found himself standing on the brink of insanity. It was just a moment ago that he offered such a huge incentive to Beryline Spirit Beast for it to resist the other party's taming.

And yet... in the blink of an eye, it had already betrayed him. Isn't there a mistake somewhere?

If the other party had offered something beyond him, such as a higher-tier spirit beast blood essence, Wei Changqing would have conceded. But what the other party offered was a resounding slap instead...

Where did the pride you had when I tamed you go? Do you have any dignity?

"Beryline Spirit Beast, what are you doing? Have you already forgotten that you're my spirit beast?"

Blood rushed to Wei Changqing's head as his face reddened in rage. Roaring loudly, he stomped forward.

As my spirit beast, how can you kneel and fawn over another? If even this could be tolerated, there would be nothing in the world that couldn't be tolerated!

Hu!

But before he could get close, a gigantic claw suddenly appeared before his eyes.

Peng!

Kicked squarely in his chest, Wei Changqing was sent flying backward, and blood spurted wildly from his mouth.

"You..."

Wei Changqing was frenzied. The one who struck him wasn't anyone else but his own tamed beast!

To think that he would be kicked by his own tamed beast while giving it a piece of his mind. It seemed like the latter had really betrayed him...

I spent two years to tame you, and the money I spent on you is sufficient to build even a castle. And yet...

Just the thought of it caused another mouthful of blood to spurt from Wei Changqing's mouth.

Big Brother, isn't this going a little too far...

"Zhang shi... managed to tame Beryline Spirit Beast?"

"Furthermore, with just a single slap?"

...

While Wei Changqing was busy spewing blood, the crowd spectating the commotion also felt as though their heads were bursting apart. The sight before them was simply too inconceivable for them to accept.

Was this a supernatural encounter, a paranormal sight, or an occult occurrence?

With just a single slap, Zhang shi actually managed to tame Beryline Spirit Beast to the point that it didn't even recognize its own master anymore, even kicking the latter away...

Why did it sound so fantastical?

"So this is... Zhang shi's Beast Pummeling Taming Method?"

Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and the others found their lips twitching uncontrollably.

When they heard of it from Zhao Ya, they took it with a tinge of skepticism; after all, the very notion of it was simply too ridiculous. But upon seeing it, they realized that it was even more ridiculous and fearsome than what they had imagined.

To make a spirit beast betray its master and become subservient to one with a single slap, how in the world does this work?

"How humiliating!"

The various elders from Zijin Sect grasped their faces once more.

"Cough cough, you don't need to kowtow anymore. I'll take you in as my tamed beast!"

After Beryline Spirit Beast kicked Wei Changqing away, it started kowtowing profusely, in fear of being rejected.

Roar!

Seeing that the other party had agreed to it, Beryline Spirit Beast stood up, walked over to the edge of the stage, and stood beside Demon Cinque Beast as though an underling. Indescribable excitement glowed in its eyes. With a proud gaze, it glanced at Wei Changqing, whose face was trickling with blood.

"..."

Wei Changqing clutched at his own chest, stifled.

It was only at this moment that it suddenly struck him-the reason why Zhang shi kept asking him if he was certain. It wasn't that the other party was unconfident... the other party was just afraid that he would be humiliated too badly.

If only he'd known, he wouldn't have clutched on to his pride and defied the words of his sect elders. He would have just admitted defeat obediently.

Not only did he lose his storage ring and spirit beast blood essence, his sole tamed beast even betrayed him. In just a single duel, he had lost all of his wealth...

Just as he was thinking this, Zhang shi's voice suddenly sounded. "Does this count as my victory?"

"If you still have any disagreements, we can go another round..."

"There's no need for it! I admit defeat." Wei Changqing face paled in fright, and he hurriedly shook his head.

Go another round?

Just a single round could put me in such a tragic state. If I were to go another round, who knows whether I would be alive by the end of it or not.

Seeing the other party admit his defeat, Zhang Xuan smiled in satisfaction. Then, he turned to Demon Cinque Beast and gestured.

"Demon Cinque, return his possessions to him!"

"Roar?"

Demon Cinque Beast's face was filled with indignation, but eventually, it still returned the jade bottle and the storage ring.

"This..."

Wei Changqing was taken aback.

Demon Cinque Beast had stolen these from him in the midst of his beast taming, and after his shameful actions, there would be no one who would protest even if Zhang shi were to take these things for his own. But to his surprise, Zhang shi actually chose to have it returned to him.

"Demon Cinque is lacking in propriety so do pardon him for his actions. It isn't easy for you to accrue such wealth, so it is only right for me to return these to you!" Zhang Xuan said impassively.

"Zhang shi..."

Wei Changqing's eyes reddened.

This is what a true master teacher should be like!

To win, Wei Changqing had shown an unsporting attitude and resorted to many underhanded tricks. Despite this, the other party overlooked it and defeated him honestly. On top of that, the other party didn't fault him on his behavior either, going to the extent of even returning the confiscated goods...

This magnanimity... He felt as though he was nothing more than a clown. Compared

to the other party, his actions were truly laughable.

'From now onward, I shall be Zhang Shi's loyal follower. I'll make anyone who dares to talk bad about him apologize!'

Clenching his fists tightly, Wei Changqing made a vow in his heart.

Formidable master teachers had their own followers as well. These followers would help to build the master teacher's reputation and bring glory to his name.

To become a great master teacher respected throughout this vast continent, followers were a necessity.

Zhang Xuan couldn't have expected that this casual whim of his would actually make this 4-star master teacher a follower of his.

Wei Changqing's loss meant that Zhang Xuan had successfully progressed to the next round. Soon, the other stages also came to a conclusion, and the top eight candidates were out.

Luo Xuan and Liao Wuzhi, the two most popular contenders for the champion seat, were among the group. What that surprised Zhang Xuan was that Song Chao was also among the group. It seemed like even though the latter seemed a little dull-witted before him, he still possessed incredible capabilities.

With his help, Ruohuan gongzi was also within the group. However, the competition was extremely intense at this stage, and it would be difficult for him to progress any further than this.

Hong Shi soon announced the pairings of the next match.

"Alright, let's begin the round to determine the top four. I'll announce the matches now. On stage A, Jun Ruohuan of Myriad Kingdom Alliance will face Luo Xuan of Fleeting Cloud Sect. On stage B, Bi Jianghai of Gazing River Sect will be facing Song Chao of Blue Frost Sect... On stage D, Zhang Xuan of Myriad Kingdom Alliance will be facing Liao Wuzhi of Frigid Gale Sect!"

"Liao Wuzhi?"

Hearing the name of his opponent, Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

He had heard of this name before. It was the genius second to only Luo Xuan on the list of contenders for the champion seat.

He didn't expect to meet him in the round to determine the top four.

"Zhang shi, you must be careful of Liao Wuzhi. I've watched his previous matches, and all of them were physical duels. Furthermore, he won every single one of them with astounding might each time!"

Su shi stepped forward and said. "Take the last match where he fought against a candidate of White Helios Sect for example, with just three slashes of his sword, his opponent was no longer able to raise his arm anymore and was forced to surrender!"

"Three slashes?"

"Un. In the entire tournament, the maximum number of moves he made with his sword was only three slashes. In fact, in the first round, he didn't even draw his sword. He was able to knock out his opponent with just the sheath itself," Su shi said with a grim expression.

Zhang Xuan's previous matches coincided with Liao Wuzhi's, and as such, he hadn't really seen much of the other party's duels.

"Even though he's only at Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle, if my eyes fail me not... his true strength is comparable to even a Half-Consonant Spirit realm master teacher!" Su shi said.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

If what Su shi said was true, Liao Wuzhi was indeed formidable.

One must know that master teachers, with their keen eye of discernment and vast knowledge of cultivation in itself, are considered to be invincible within their power class. To be able to defeat a master teacher of higher cultivation realm is an incredible feat in itself.

"It's about to start!"

After discussing a moment longer, Zhang Xuan saw the other party walking over to the stage, and thus, he began walking over without any hesitation as well.

At this moment, the aura shrouding Liao Wuzhi seemed to have reached the peak. His very presence was reminiscent of the sharp edge of a sword.

As soon as Zhang Xuan stepped onto the stage, Liao Wuzhi immediately said, "Zhang shi, I challenge you to a sword duel!"

"Sure. It just so happens that I've learnt a new sword art recently, and I've yet to try it out."

Zhang Xuan smiled lightly.

He didn't say those words out of humility; those words were the absolute fact. Not only had he never used the sword art before, he had never even practiced it before.

In other words, he had only emulated the sword art in his mind ever since learning it. As such, he wasn't sure about exactly how strong it would be.

And this sword art was the enhanced version of Heaven's Path Sword Art that he tidied up on his way to the Glacier Plain Court.

The Heaven's Path Sword Art, Heaven's Path Spear Art, and other Heaven's Path battle techniques started out as movements, but beyond that point, it was hinged mainly on conception. A difference in conception could result in vastly different results for the same set of movements.

As such, master swordsmen were able to train through their thoughts; they didn't need to go through the physical motions with a sword in hand.

To have not executed a sword art that one has learned and not know how powerful it is... Zhang Xuan was probably the only one in the entire history of the world.

Seeing the other party agree to it, Liao Wuzhi smiled. Then, he turned to Hong shi and said, "Hong shi, I've a request that I'd like to make!"

"Speak!" Hong shi nodded.

"I wish for a private duel with Zhang shi. I hope that you can accede to my request!" Liao Wuzhi said.

"You want a private duel? Alright, I can agree to that!" Hong shi nodded.

Given that Zhang shi was a powerful adversary, the chances were that Liao Wuzhi would have to resort to his trump cards, and it was understandable why he wouldn't want his trump cards to be exposed in public.

As such, his request was reasonable.

In any case, everyone here was a master teacher, and there was no one who would be so shameless as to deny their own loss.

Hu!

Hong shi snapped his fingers, and a mist immediately rose in stage D, hiding it from the sight of others. Even a Consonant Spirit realm expert would be unable to peer through it.

"It's a pity that we'll miss out on such an exciting duel!"

"Indeed. Liao Wuzhi possesses incredible aptitude in swordsmanship while the depth to Zhang shi's ability has yet to be uncovered. I thought that I could learn some things from their duel, but it turns out they will be conducting it in private... How frustrating!"

"Then, who of the two do you think would win?"

"My bet is on Zhang shi. There hasn't been an opponent in the tournament who could match him so far. Liao shi might be powerful, but it is unlikely that he would be a match for him."

"I disagree with your view. Liao shi's aptitude in swordsmanship could be said to be unmatched by any of his peers. It's like you didn't see the previous duels he had; there was no one who could withstand the immense might of his swordsmanship. Given how skilled Zhang shi is in fist art, he must have devoted most of his time to it. There is a good chance that he might be lacking in his swordsmanship!"

...

The most anticipated duel ended up being a private one. Everyone couldn't help but find it a huge pity.

"Shh, I think their duel... has already begun!"

Suddenly, someone amidst the crowd shouted. Following which, the guards and soldiers in the surroundings suddenly felt their swords in their hands shake, and an agitated metallic call sounded from their resonance.

"This is... Call of the Myriad Swords, Roar of the Dragons! But which of the two of them... has achieved Sword Heart realm?"

Chapter 597

Imparting Sword Art

Call of the Myriad Swords, Roar of the Dragons; this phenomenon was a manifestation of Sword Heart realm. Upon reaching such a level of mastery in swordsmanship, one's sword would be granted spirit, allowing one to wield it as though it was one's own limbs. To a master swordsman, this enhanced level of control could easily translate into a twofold increase in fighting prowess.

Those who had achieved this realm were already qualified to establish their own sects and start their own lineage of swordsmanship.

In fact, most of the current sect leaders and emperors in the world hadn't even reached such a level yet. Just which of the duo in the mist was the one who had reached this astounding level of mastery, causing the innumerable swords out here to bow down to him?

And who was the one filling the entire stage with sword qi, leaving the crowd below with goosebumps?

"It must be Liao Wuzhi. Our two sects are stationed at the foot of the mountain beyond Myriad Kingdom City, and he has been practicing his swordsmanship by the waterfall every morning. The metallic echo of his sword reverberates through the entire valley, gushing up into the heavens. Back then, I realized that even if he hadn't reached Sword Heart realm, he must at least be at Sword Intent realm pinnacle!"

"Now that you spoke of it, I suddenly remember seeing the marks he left behind in his training once. Through the manifestation of sword qi, his swings could easily reach a distance of several zhang (10 - 30 meters). That day, when I coincidentally walked by his training location, I realized that all of the marks on the ground are of equal depth! Most probably, only a person who has achieved Sword Heart realm would be capable of such precise control!"

"Well, Liao Wuzhi isn't called the Unparalleled Sword Genius of the Frigid Gale Sect for nothing, after all."

"Indeed. One who has achieved Sword Heart Realm is practically undefeatable among those of the same cultivation realm. Not to mention, Zhang shi's cultivation is lower than the other party from the very start. I'm afraid the latter's chance at victory is extremely slim!"

"I don't share your viewpoint. On the contrary, I think that Zhang shi is the one who has reached Sword Heart realm! It's not like you didn't see the miracles he has created in past few rounds..."

...

Sensing the manifestation of seemingly endless sword qi within the mist, grave looks appeared on the faces of the master teachers below the stage.

"Sword Heart realm?"

Wu Tianhao's body trembled.

His initial thought back then was to challenge Zhang shi to a sword duel instead of a fist duel. He thought that given his mastery in swordsmanship, the duel would be a walk in the park for him. How could he have known that Zhang shi would accept the fist duel?

Thus, he thought that if he had another chance to challenge the other party, he would surely propose a sword duel straight away. But after sensing the clash of sword qi before him, he lost all of his confidence.

Even if Zhang shi wasn't the one who had comprehended Sword Heart realm, given how he could rival such an expert, his swordsmanship couldn't possibly be poor.

At the very least, he knew he wouldn't stand a chance against a Sword Heart realm expert.

"Can Zhang shi... win?"

Pavilion Master Kang and the others were worried.

"Don't worry, he'll surely win. Just that..." Zhao Feiwu's eyebrows knitted together.

"Just that?"

Knowing that the Second Princess was close with Zhang shi, the others immediately turned their attention to her.

"Without a doubt, Zhang shi's swordsmanship has already reached Sword Heart realm!" Zhao Feiwu revealed.

Back then, on Xuanyuan Kingdom's Heaven's Altar, Zhang shi has displayed the might of a Sword Heart realm expert. Standing atop the back of an aerial spirit beast then, Jin Conghai and her had seen everything clearly.

Along with the rise in his cultivation, his level of comprehension in swordsmanship must have been deepened as well. She had no doubt that the person who had gotten into the Sword Heart realm within the mist was him.

Even if that wasn't the case, she was confident that Zhang shi's swordsmanship mastery was in no way lower than this.

"Just that... he doesn't have any suitable weapons..." Zhao Feiwu continued.

Zhang shi had risen too quickly. Even though he managed to accrue sufficient spirit stones to fuel his cultivation, he hadn't been able to find a suitable weapon for himself.

Back at Honghai City Formation Master Guild, he even had to borrow the weapons of others to inscribe a formation plate.

While one's swordsmanship mastery was important in a sword duel, one's weapon also played a pivotal role. If one didn't have a decent weapon to rival the weapon of one's opponent, one would be immediately placed in a disadvantageous position.

"H-how... can this be?"

Pavilion Master Kang and the others were stunned.

With a teacher as formidable as Yang shi, they thought the one thing Zhang shi wouldn't lack was cultivation resources. Who could have known that he wouldn't even have a Spirit middle-tier sword? To fight against a formidable sword genius in a sword duel without a decent sword... how could he win?

If only they had known in advance, they would have surely gotten one for him. Now that the duel had already begun, they couldn't interfere anymore.

"It's too late to do anything, we can only have faith in Zhang shi!"

Zhao Feiwu shook her head.

While the group was still worried for Zhang shi, a voice suddenly sounded from the mist, "Hong shi, please release the formation!"

"The battle has ended?"

Everyone was stunned.

If the formation was going to be released, did it mean that there was already a conclusion to the duel?

But how much time had passed? Making a rough estimate, it seemed like it hadn't been even two minutes since the start... A victor was already decided in this short period of time?

This was way too fast!

Hu!

Amidst perplexed gazes, the mist slowly scattered, revealing two silhouettes.

Zhang shi and Liao Wuzhi were still standing at their original position before the duel, as though nothing had happened before. There wasn't the slightest wound or cut on their bodies either. It should have been a perilous sword duel, but on the surface, it seemed as though the fight hadn't even started.

"This... So who won?"

"I've no idea either... but where is Zhang shi's sword?"

"You're right. Isn't this a sword duel? Why isn't Zhang shi wielding a sword?"

"It can't be that Zhang shi has admitted defeat?"

...

The crowd quickly realized that, while there was a sharp sword in Liao Wuzhi's hand,

Zhang shi's hands were completely empty. It was impossible to tell whether he had put the sword back into his storage ring or he didn't take anything out in the first place.

It was impossible to discern who won or loss from this alone.

Just as the crowd was speculating the situation...

"I lost!" Liao Wuzhi declared suddenly. He shook his head and put his sword back into his storage ring.

"Liao shi lost?"

"What happened?"

A huge commotion immediately broke out after the shocking admit of defeat.

What in the world did Zhang shi do in that two minutes to make the Sword Genius Liao Wuzhi admit defeat so willingly?

"Zhang shi's swordsmanship has reached a profound level that is far beyond me!"

Ignoring the shocked gazes from the crowd below, Liao Wuzhi stepped forward and clasped his fist, "I've reached Sword Heart realm primary stage, but I find myself unable to progress any further than that. May I ask Zhang shi to enlighten me as to how I should proceed from here onward?"

He was the only one of the entire Frigid Gale Sect to have reached Sword Heart realm, and thus, he could only slowly progress through trial and error. But at this stage, he found himself completely clueless as to how he could further progress.

Even though the person before him was even younger than him, his comprehension of swordsmanship was far beyond his own. If the other party could offer him some pointers, he would surely be able to climb to even higher heights.

"You want my pointers?"

Even though Zhang Xuan didn't expect Liao Wuzhi to ask for his guidance so directly, he nodded his head impassively and raised his hand. "Pass me your sword!"

"Yes!"

Liao Wuzhi's eyes lit up upon hearing those words. He immediately took out his sword and passed it to the other party.

With a flick of his finger, Zhang Xuan drew the sword, and a stifling cold gleam immediately reflected into the surroundings.

"Zhang shi... is going to offer some pointers to Liao Wuzhi?"

"That seems to be the case. But... if it's just offering pointers, why can't he use his own sword? After all, the sword has already acknowledged Liao Wuzhi to be his master. If the sword spirit were to resist Zhang shi's control, he would be unable to fully display the might of his swordsmanship!"

"Indeed, how bizarre..."

...

A deep frown appeared on everyone's forehead after seeing Zhang Xuan asking for Liao Wuzhi's sword.

A Spirit-tier sword possessed spirit, and as long as the master it had recognized was still alive, it would be hard for anyone else to wield it. Since Zhang shi was going to display his impart some pointers to the other party, why couldn't he use his own sword?

Just as the crowd was perplexed as to what Zhang shi was doing, the sword in the latter's hand suddenly released a crisp call.

"Spirit Euphoria, the sword wants to acknowledge him as its master?"

"He made Liao shi's sword acknowledge him just by touching it?"

Everyone was stunned.

One must know that making a Spirit-tier weapon acknowledge one as its master was an extremely troublesome process. There were many people who would spend years wiping their sword daily, treating it with utmost care and concern, and had yet to succeed. On the other hand, Zhang shi, with a single touch, actually induced Spirit Euphoria from Liao shi's sword...

Wasn't this way too unbelievable?

Liao Wuzhi clearly didn't expect this either, and his eyes widened in shock.

Back then, he had spent half a year of effort, during which, he even nourished it for an entire month with his own blood, before successfully making the sword submit to him.

Yet, the other party, with a single touch, won the loyalty of the sword... Was the gap between the both of them really this big?

While he was overwhelmed with shock, Zhang shi's impassive voice sounded.

"Look carefully, I'll only show it to you once!"

Thus, he quickly calmed himself down and focused his attention on the other party.

The crowd below also fell silent. Everyone's eyes were widened, and they dared not blink in fear of missing out even the slightest detail.

To defeat Liao shi who had comprehended the Sword Heart realm, they wanted to see how far Zhang shi had progressed in the path of swordsmanship.

Hu!

Amidst everyone's intense gazes, the sword in Zhang Xuan's hand moved.

The sword which was emitting a stifling cold gleam a moment ago seemed to have lost its glow and strength in Zhang shi's hand. The blow seemed to carry no weight behind it at all; at the same time, it felt like a movement from the extension of his hand-there was no dissonance in that simple movement at all.

Huala!

The cut was made toward Liao Wuzhi. After shooting past him, it quickly retracted. Even though there was minimal force behind the movement, it was extremely fast, so there were many who failed to catch its full motion.

Danglang!

Zhang Xuan sheathed the sword, threw it back to the other party, and walked off the

stage.

"What a fast sword art!"

"Is this Zhang shi's comprehension of swordsmanship?"

Everyone stared at one another in incomprehension.

Even Liao Wuzhi himself was confused.

While Zhang shi's sword was fast, he could easily emulate that speed with his strength. In fact, he could go even faster than that... If this was all there was to it, there was nothing he could learn from this!

Hu!

Amidst his confusion, a wind suddenly blew, and a hair from his forehead was lifted into the air before slowly floating down.

"With his previous movement... he severed a strand of my hair?"

Seeing the floating strand of hair, Liao Wuzhi's eyes narrowed.

Given his lush hair, to sever a single hair precisely without cutting any other, the other party's control over his sword had reached an absurd level!

As expected of Zhang shi, fearsome!

"Zhang shi severed a hair with his sword without Liao shi noticing?"

"What kind of swordsmanship is that? How powerful must one's control of the sword be to achieve such a feat?"

"I have no idea... But this is probably the very pinnacle of Lower Sword Heart... Perhaps, it might even be at the level of Middle Sword Heart!"

"Middle Sword Heart?"

Everyone fell silent in shock.

If they hadn't witnessed such a sight for themselves, they would have never believed that anyone in the world would be able to control their weapon so precisely.

"Zhang shi, I thank you for your pointer..."

Liao Wuzhi clasped his fist respectfully.

Zhang Xuan departing figure suddenly stopped and asked, "Did you understand it?"

"I understand. The reason why Zhang shi severed a single hair is to tell me to refine my control over my sword..." Liao Wuzhi quickly stated his own understanding of the situation.

But before he was done speaking, Zhang shi shook his head. His back beneath the moonlight seemed to slump slightly in disappointment. "It seems like... you didn't understand it!"

After which, he flicked his wrist lightly.

Hu!

Another wind blew, and the hair instantaneously split into dozens of segments which danced in their surroundings.

"It... wasn't a single slash?"

Liao Wuzhi's face immediately paled.

Chapter 598

Duel of Knowledge Impartation

It was impossible for the wind generated from the movement of the other party's sleeve to sever the air. There was only one possibility to the current situation-Zhang shi's previous movement wasn't just a single cut... it was dozens of cuts!

However, these cuts didn't sever the strand of hair entirely, making it seem as though it was still whole. It was only under the tug of the light breeze that they came to the limit of their durability and broke into dozens of segments.

Glancing downward to look at the floating segments of the strand of hair, he realized that each segment was of equal length, and the point of severance was smooth.

Even slicing a strand of hair with a sword was extremely difficult even for a Sword Heart realm expert, to consecutively cut a strand of hair dozens of time without severing it... How insane must one's level of control be?

Liao Wuzhi's body trembled uncontrollably. No words could express his emotions at this moment.

He'd thought that he had understood the other party's pointer, but from the start to the end... he was merely scratching at the surface!

This wasn't just mere control anymore. Rather, his sword had become a part of his body and gained 'sensitivity'. That was the only plausible reason as to why he could accurately gauge the depth of each cut so it could be split apart with a slight breeze instantaneously...

Coming to a realization, he quickly lifted his head, only to realize that Zhang shi had already left the stage.

'I'll work hard so as to not let you down!'

Replaying the motion of Zhang Xuan's sword in his head, Liao shi realized that this was a huge opportunity for him. Clenching his fists tightly, he walked down the stage

and returned back to his group. In an instant, numerous elders of the Frigid Gale Sect immediately surrounded him.

"How did you lose just now? He didn't seem to be holding a sword just now, what did he use to defeat you?"

The group was still bewildered by the happenings before.

Zhang Shi didn't seem to have even taken out his sword at all. But if that was the case, why did Liao Wuzhi admit defeat?

"What did he use to defeat me?"

Remembering the sight from before, Liao Wuzhi smiled bitterly before saying, "A finger..."

"A finger?"

Everyone was dumbstruck.

...

Luck no longer played as heavy a role in the battle for the top four. Song Chao and Ruohuan gongzi were forced to stop at this point. Other than Zhang Xuan, the other three who managed to qualify for the next round were all 4-star pinnacle master teacher, Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle experts.

As if trying to not let the expectations of the crowd down, they were all the most popular contenders for the champion seat as well.

This was especially so for Luo Xuan. In the fight against Ruohuan gongzi, he had achieved a near perfect victory.

While it was regrettable that Ruohuan gongzi had to stop here, he was already content. If not for Zhang Shi, he might have been eliminated in the selection round. How else could he have possibly gotten into the top eight and gain the opportunity to study at Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?

"For the next round, Luo Xuan of Fleeting Cloud Sect will be fighting against Bi Jianghai of Gazing River Sect, and Huang Zheng of Cascading Sand Sect will be fighting against

Zhang Xuan of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance!"

Hong shi revealed the matching for the round.

"Huang Zheng of Cascading Sand Sect? The fellow who is placed fourth on the list of potential contenders for champion?"

Zhang Xuan glanced at the young man on the stage.

Placed in the fourth rank, this fellow was in no way inferior to Liao Wuzhi, be it his strength or his cultivation.

"Un. Zhang shi, be careful. Even though the dueling format Huang Zheng proposed in each match has been different, he still won every one of them with ease. His true capability is fearsome! In fact, I'm even thinking that he might have hidden his true strength!" Pavilion Master Kang said with a grim expression.

He had been paying attention to Huang Zheng's duels, and even though the latter had chosen different dueling formats for each round, he was still able to triumph over his opponent easily. The latter's capability seemed to be greater than what he had predicted.

In fact, the latter didn't seem to lose out to Luo Xuan at all.

"It matters not who he is; having to face Zhang shi, he should be the one who's worried!" Zhao Feiwu smiled.

"You're right..." Pavilion Master Kang laughed awkwardly.

He had been worried that Zhang shi would be unable to survive the full tournament due to his lacking cultivation, but after the duels with Wu Tianhao and Liao Wuzhi, such a thought had vanished completely from his mind.

Zhang shi was just like an invincible God of War. Those who faced him in battle would meet tragic ends that would totally shatter their confidence.

While Huang Zheng had shown spectacular results in his previous matches, that was only because his opponents were someone else. Against Zhang shi... it was unlikely he would fare any better than the others.

Seeing the group's confidence in him, Zhang Xuan smiled bitterly before walking up to the stage.

Huang Zheng was already on the stage at this point. Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, he clasped his fist and greeted, "Zhang shi!"

"Huang shi!" Zhang Xuan also returned the gesture.

"I wish to challenge Zhang shi to a match of knowledge impartation!" Huang Zheng said impassively.

"Knowledge impartation?"

"Un. The rules are simple. A hundred people will be randomly chosen from the square, and we'll conduct our lectures simultaneously. Impartation of Heaven's Will is banned in the duel. At the end of the lecture, whoever manages to awe more people to acknowledge him as their teacher will be the victor!" Huang Zheng revealed the rules.

Even the same dueling format could have different types of rules. But of course, if one were to find it unfair, they were allowed to reject it.

"I'll accept your challenge!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

...

"Knowledge impartation? And Impartation of Heaven's Will is banned? Isn't this a little too much!"

"Indeed. Impartation of Heaven's Will is a symbol of master teacher's power, as well as their greatest strength. How could a match of knowledge impartation do without it?"

"Huang shi surely has it planned out well. Based on the previous experiences, it would be difficult to win against Zhang shi in any type of dueling format. However, knowledge impartation is different. Sometimes, no matter how good a teacher's lecture is, if a student doesn't simply doesn't like it, he wouldn't benefit much from it. As such... luck plays a significant role in this challenge as well. On top of that, Impartation of Heaven's Will is banned in the challenge as well... It's hard to tell who will win!"

"Indeed..."

Hearing the content of the competition, discussions broke out amidst the crowd.

Knowledge impartation didn't hinge solely on the reputation and capability of the teacher only, there were many other factors in play as well. It was just like how even the most perfect of beings couldn't possibly win the amity of everyone.

Human emotions are fickle, and this would be the greatest variable of them all.

Zhang shi might be able to win with absolute certainty in other types of duel, but this... it would be hard to say for sure.

As expected of one of the most popular contender for the champion seat, Huang Zheng was able to come up with a countermeasure swiftly and propose a dueling format that was the most advantageous to him.

Otherwise, he probably wouldn't stand a chance at all.

...

The rules were simple, and since both sides had no objections, they started making preparations for the duel.

Soon, a hundred people were seated on the stage. Some were the guards from Myriad Kingdom Alliance while some were just ordinary spectators.

Having been chosen to listen to the lectures of two great master teachers, the eyes of the hundred people glowed in excitement.

This was a godsend for them. It was not every day that one got to listen to the lecture of two genius 4-star master teachers.

"The cultivation realm of the group ranges over a wide spectrum, so why don't we just talk about some of the more fundamental knowledge behind cultivation instead? Otherwise, if we were to decipher a specific cultivation realm instead, those with lower cultivation realm would not understand, and those with higher cultivation realm would find it pointless!" Huang Zheng said.

The cultivation realms of the hundred people chosen ranged from Fighter 1-dan to

Transcendent Mortal 3-dan. If they were to lecture on the cultivation of Transcendent Mortals, those still in the Fighter realm wouldn't understand. On the other hand, if they were to decipher the cultivation of Fighters, the ones who had transcended that realm would simply yawn in boredom.

Only fundamental knowledge applicable to cultivation in general could pique all of their interest simultaneously.

"Alright!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

He was fine with this decision. He might be lacking in other topics, but in terms of fundamentals in cultivation... even Kong shi might not necessarily be able to speak better than him if he were here.

The fundamentals compiled by the Library of Heaven's Path was completely devoid of flaws, and this was one feat that no master teacher could possibly achieve.

"Alright. The both of us will use telepathy to relay our lecture to the group, and they'll be allowed to listen to the lecture of whoever they prefer. The time limit is an incense's time, and whoever wins the acknowledgement of members of the group after the time is up will be the winner!"

Huang Zheng explained the content of the duel before waving his hands. "Let's begin then!"

"Un. You go first!"

Zhang Xuan gestured patiently with a smile.

"I won't stand on ceremony then!"

A glint flashed across Huang Zheng's eyes, and he began on his lecture.

As he used telepathy to relay the content of his lecture, there was no one beneath the stage who could hear anything.

After listening to the other party's lecture for a while, Zhang Xuan felt that the other party's deciphering of the fundamentals wasn't too bad and nodded his head in commendation. Only then did he step forward and begin as well.

...

"The duel has begun!"

"But given that the both of them are lecturing simultaneously, how does the listening group decide on whom they should listen to?"

"Simple, they'll just listen to the lecture which content attracts and benefits them!"

"You're right. Although most cultivators are incapable of multi-tasking, it isn't too difficult for them to filter off the words of one side!"

Seeing that the duel had begun, discussions immediately sounded from the crowd.

"Who do you think will win this match?"

"It's hard to say, but my bet is on Zhang shi again!"

"If Impartation of Heaven's Will was allowed, Zhang shi surely wouldn't have any problem. But given the rules, it'll have to depend on whose fundamental knowledge of fundamental is stronger..."

"Considering the larger collection of profound books in the Cascading Sand Sect, Huang Zheng seems to be in a far better position!"

...

There was no one below who wasn't curious about how this would turn out. Since they were unable to listen to the content of the lecture, they focused their attention on the group on the stage in hopes of being able to discern something.

But it was a pity that their hopes fell flat.

The group listening to the lecture seemed to have been hypnotized. They were indeed listening attentively with a look drunk in pleasure, but it was impossible to tell whether the cause of it was Zhang shi's lecture or Huang shi's lecture.

Just as everyone was curious to see the results of the duel, someone amidst the crowd suddenly shouted, "Luo Xuan and Bi Jianghai's duel has ended..."

The crowd immediately turned their sights to the other stage and saw that the duel had come to an end.

Bi Jianghai's eyebrows were arched upward. He was carrying a disposition reminiscent of a majestic dragon, unassailable by any.

On the other hand, Luo Xuan, the most popular contender for the champion seat, was standing opposite to him. He was shaking his head with slightly disappointed expression.

"What happened?"

"Who won?"

Seeing this sight, everyone was taken aback.

Bi Jianghai came from humble origins, and he wasn't even among the top ten contenders for the champion seat. As such, everyone thought that he would surely end in defeat against Luo Xuan. But why does the scene tell a different story instead?

"Luo shi lost!" a master teacher who was spectating the duel said. His voice was tinged in disbelief, as though he found his own words hard to believe as well.

"Luo shi is the strongest contender for the champion seat, how could he possibly lose?"

There were many among the crowd who found this conclusion inconceivable.

"The both of them competed in a duel of cultivation. The both of them are equals, or rather, Luo shi was in a slightly more advantageous position. Logically speaking, he should have been able to win. Who could have thought that... with a stroke of good luck, Bi shi managed to achieve a breakthrough in the midst of the duel, reaching Consonant Spirit realm!"

That master teacher smiled bitterly.

"Achieve a breakthrough?"

"Consonant Spirit realm?"

Everyone was stunned.

Chapter 599

Give Me a Moment, I'll Go Make Some Breakthroughs First!

Consonant Spirit realm was the first difficult hurdle of the nine dans of Transcendent Mortal. There were innumerable cultivators who found their footsteps stopping altogether at Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle.

This hurdle required one's soul to be perfectly harmonized with one's physical body. This balance was difficult to achieve even if one were to focus all of one's effort into it. To do so in the midst of a battle... Wasn't this Bi shi a little, no, way too lucky?

That was a realm that innumerable cultivators dream of! To actually succeed in such an unlikely situation...

"It isn't surprising that Luo shi would lose under such circumstances. After all, that is Consonant Spirit realm!"

"While luck did play a role in Bi shi sudden breakthrough, the previous hard work he put into his cultivation and his guts were also crucial to creating this miracle. It seems like Bi shi is the true dark horse of this tournament!"

"He has remained humble all along, but at a crucial moment, he still managed to turn the tables around. Impressive!"

...

After finding out what happened during the duel, everyone was impressed.

Facing an equal in a duel was already a difficult feat in itself. To actually attempt a breakthrough at this moment, how much guts must it take for this?

Putting aside how powerful Bi shi was before, just his mental fortitude in itself was already extraordinary.

Even though Luo Xuan lost, considering his opponent, there was nothing for him to regret.

"Now the result of this match is out, let's see whether Zhang shi or Bi shi will win in that duel..."

Since one match of the semi-finals was over, everyone turned their attention back to the other stage. They were curious to see which of the two geniuses would clash over the champion throne.

"They have stopped the lecture!"

"Un. The time is up, so it's about time for them to wrap things up!"

Amidst mutters from the crowd, the hundred people seated cross-legged on the stage slowly opened their eyes, and an excited gleam flashed across each and every one of their eyes.

It seemed like this incense's time lecture session had brought them immense benefits, resolving many problems they had faced in their cultivation.

"Who won?"

"I still can't tell. We'll have to see who the hundred people on stage will choose to acknowledge!"

"Un!"

Knowing that the conclusion to the match was near, everyone's hearts beat anxiously. They quickly turned their glances over, curious to see who would emerge victorious.

With the end of the lecture, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief as well.

Even though he was confident in his lecture, he had no way of telling how the hundred people would choose.

After all, without Impartation of Heaven's Will, the credibility of his words would be significantly lower. On top of that, they would also find it harder to comprehend some of the more profound and abstract concepts.

'I've already tried my best, I can only wait for the results now!'

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan decided not to think too much into it. Thus, he turned his sight to the crowd and said, "Everyone..."

Zhang Xuan was just about to ask who was willing to acknowledge him as their teacher when a silhouette suddenly flashed across his eyes. A person had kneeled before him.

"Zhang shi, please take me in as your student. I'll surely study hard so as to not let you down..."

"Huang shi, what are you doing?"

Taking a closer look at the face of the kneeling person, Zhang Xuan leaped in fright.

It was no other than his opponent, Huang Zheng!

Even though the both of them were conducting their own lectures, they could still listen to the content of the other party's lecture. The content of Zhang Xuan's lecture was incredibly profound, but he had managed to express it in a simplified form that anyone could easily comprehend.

"What?"

"Right after the lecture, before the others could make their decision, Huang shi has already tried to acknowledge Zhang shi as his teacher?"

"Can anyone tell me what is going on?"

"To make a 4-star pinnacle master teacher kneel with just fundamental knowledge... Just what in the world was spoken in the lecture?"

"Indeed! Furthermore, Impartation of Heaven's Will wasn't used at all throughout the lecture!"

...

The crowd below flew into a frenzy.

Based on Zhang shi's previous feats, it was entirely possible for him to beguile Huang

shi into kneeling before him. But... Impartation of Heaven's Will was banned in the duel, and the content of the lecture was only fundamental knowledge of cultivation...

For Huang shi to kneel down just like that...

What in the world happened?

It was such an intense duel, but before the results were out, the other party had already kneeled down to acknowledge the other party as his teacher... No matter how composed the crowd was, they still felt as though their heads were about to be blown away from shock.

Must everything be so exaggerated?

"Zhang shi, we would also like to come under your tutelage..."

But that wasn't the end of it. Every single one of the hundred cultivators on stage quickly rushed forward and kneeled before Zhang Xuan as well. Their eyes gleamed in earnest respect for the latter.

"All one hundred of them chose Zhang shi?"

In an instant, the entire square fell completely silent.

If two master teachers of the equivalent ranks were to conduct a lecture simultaneously, the result would usually be around half on both sides. After all, knowledge impartation in itself was subjective, and one's choice could be easily influenced by one's own emotions... And yet, all hundred cultivators actually chose to acknowledge Zhang Xuan as their teacher.

What in the world did he talk about to impress every last one of them?

On top of that, he even captured the heart of a 4-star pinnacle master teacher in the midst of doing so!

This... Even a 5-star master teacher wouldn't be capable of such a feat!

"Alright, you all should get up. Regardless of the final result, I'll conduct a lecture for everyone at the end of the tournament!" Zhang Xuan also didn't expect so many to acknowledge him at once, and he couldn't help but feel a headache.

"Yes!"

Hearing Zhang shi agreeing to conduct a lecture, the group nodded their heads and took a step back.

"In this round... Zhang shi is the victor!"

Seeing that everyone had finally calmed down, Hong shi nodded his head and announced the result.

"Don't pull me, I must acknowledge Zhang shi as my teacher..."

Just as Hong shi was about to announce the final round, a scream of agony sounded. Shooting a glance over, his lips twitched uncontrollably.

Huang shi, who had walked onto the stage haughtily a moment ago, was kneeling earnestly before Zhang shi, unwilling to back down at all. In the end, he had to be dragged away by his fellow peers in the sect, but even so, he still continued shouting as though a lunatic.

"Sigh, this fellow is a goner..."

Seeing this scene of madness, Hong shi shook his head.

As a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, it struck him even more vividly how profound Zhang Xuan's comprehension of cultivation was, and as such, he also suffered the greatest 'side effect'.

Looking at the other party's state, it seemed like he would never compromise until Zhang shi took him in as his student.

There was not a single round that Zhang shi didn't pass without breaking anything. He didn't even spare his fellow humans as well-those who faced him were either severely injured or went insane...

What the heck was this?!

It was as if shattering artifacts wasn't sufficient to satisfy him. He had to destroy every last shred of the confidence of his opponent as well.

"Alright, we'll rest for ten minutes before the champion round. Zhang shi will be facing... Bi shi!"

Ignoring the completely flabbergasted faces of the crowd below and the convulsing Huang Zheng, Hong shi announced the results.

Thus, Zhang Xuan walked down from the stage.

"Zhang shi, Bi shi has managed to reach Consonant Spirit realm in the midst of the round and defeated Luo shi..."

As soon as Zhang Xuan walked over, Pavilion Master Kang hurriedly pulled him to the side and explained the situation of the previous round to him.

"He managed to achieve a breakthrough in the midst of the duel and defeated Luo shi?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

This matter sounded bizarre even to him.

"Indeed. Even though there's only a thin wall between Consonant Spirit realm primary stage and Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle, it is a whole new world on the other side. I fear that... he will challenge you to a duel of cultivation!"

"There's no doubt about it, he will surely do that!"

Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and the others couldn't help but feel worried for Zhang Xuan.

Even though Zhang shi was able to win against Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle Liao Wuzhi with his swordsmanship, it would still be difficult for him to face a true Consonant Spirit realm expert.

Consonant Spirit realm represented a perfect harmony between a tempered soul and a body; not only would one's strength increase by leaps and bounds, one's reaction speed and flexibility would be significantly enhanced as well.

At this point, one could be said to have stepped into the gateway of becoming a true expert.

It would be difficult to win against Zhang shi in any other challenge, so Bi shi would

surely opt for a challenge that could utilize the advantage in his cultivation.

After all, no matter how spectacular Zhang shi's results were, he was only at Transcendent Mortal 3-dan pinnacle. Regardless of how talented or astute his senses were, it was impossible for him to make up for the gap between two huge cultivation realms to defeat a Consonant Spirit realm expert.

No one had never done so, not even the geniuses in the long history of the Master Teacher Pavilion.

"He will surely propose a cultivation duel to Zhang shi, what should we do... We can reject the proposal, right?"

"Reject? He can just pick another dueling format that is heavily dependent on one's cultivation realm!"

Everyone was anxious.

Zhao Feiwu couldn't help but comment, "Considering Zhang shi's ability to challenge even those stronger than him... if he could make a breakthrough to Clarifying Turbidity realm right now, he might still stand a chance..."

Despite being at Transcendent Mortal 3-dan pinnacle, Zhang shi was able to defeat Liao Wuzhi, who was at Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle. If he could make the leap to Clarifying Turbidity realm right now, he might still stand a chance.

"Make a breakthrough to Clarifying Turbidity realm... That is easier said than done! Already half of the ten minutes resting time is over, do you really think Zhang shi can make a breakthrough within five minutes?"

Hearing her word, a bitter smile surfaced on Pavilion Master Kang's face as he shook his head.

Cultivating was similar to ascending a mountain. It was impossible to jump to the peak instantly, one could only progress slowly a step at a time.

Zhang shi had already made humongous progress in the past few months. How could he possibly just achieve a breakthrough within this five minutes?

That's impossible!

Aren't you pulling our legs?

"You're right..." Zhao Feiwu shook her head as well. Just as she was about to rummage through her head for another solution, the young man beside her turned around and asked, "You're saying that as long as I can reach Clarifying Turbidity realm, I'll stand a chance against him?"

"That's right..."

Zhao Feiwu nodded her head.

"Alright then. Give me a moment, I'll go make some breakthroughs..."

Zhang shi nodded. Flicking his wrist, a middle-tier spirit stone appeared in his palm, and he gripped onto it tightly with both of his hands. In an instant, it was as though someone had set his aura ablaze, and his cultivation began raising at a rapid pace.

"Give you a moment?"

"It can't be that Zhang shi intends to achieve a breakthrough right now?"

"What's so surprising about that? It's not like he has never achieved a breakthrough during crucial moments before..."

Hearing Zhang shi's words, everyone was stunned.

Did you need to be so over the top?

Making a breakthrough as and when you like, do you really think that cultivating is that easy?

But before everyone could recover from their shock, they heard a buzz. Zhang shi seemed to have broken through some kind of barrier, and his aura rose swiftly.

"Transcendent Mortal 4-dan... Clarifying Turbidity realm?"

The mouths of Pavilion Master Kang and the others twitched.

We thought that you were just saying it on a whim, but you were actually serious about it?

Feeling the disruption in the spiritual energy in the air, from a distance not too far away, Bi Jianghai turned his gaze over to look at the Myriad Kingdom Alliance group.

He thought that he would be able to deal with Zhang shi easily now that he had reached Consonant Spirit realm. Who knew that the other party would actually make a breakthrough as well...

Zhang shi, is there anything in the world that you can't do?

"No, I mustn't allow him to continue on like that. Otherwise, I'll surely lose the tournament..."

Gritting his teeth, Bi Jianghai dashed up to the stage, flung his sleeves, and declared, "Zhang shi, surely we should have already rested enough already. Since everyone is waiting, why don't we just start now?"

"Start now?"

"He must feel threatened by Zhang shi's breakthrough!"

"Indeed! Zhang shi has just barely made a breakthrough and he hasn't had any time to reinforce his cultivation yet. Under such circumstances, he won't be able to utilize his full strength, and it seems like Bi shi intends to exploit this opening. After all, once Zhang shi succeeds in reinforcing his cultivation, things might get shaky for Bi shi."

Seeing Bi Jianghai proposing to resume the duel halfway through the break, the crowd frowned.

Chapter 600

Finals (1)

"Transcendent Mortal 4-dan Clarifying Turbidity realm. 'Clarify' refers to the soul whereas 'turbid' refers to the body. Usually, right after the breakthrough, the 'clear' and the 'turbid' would still be intermixed together as though a puddle of murky water. If Zhang shi was given an hour's time for the 'turbid' to settle, his fighting prowess would surely soar greatly. To fight right now... His fighting prowess would still be no different from a Yin-Yang realm pinnacle cultivator!"

"Before the distinction between 'clear' and 'turbid' is drawn, one's body and soul would remain stuck together. In the worst-case scenario, Zhang shi's fighting prowess might even dip due to this."

"But Bi shi can't be blamed for this either. In the end, this is a tournament, and if I were in his shoes, I would have done the same as well!"

"The champion seat of the Master Teacher Tournament has always been highly regarded. He couldn't possibly give up now that the crown is right before him..."

...

There was a significant proportion of the crowd who shook their heads upon seeing Bi shi's actions.

Master teachers are humans as well, and there is no human in this world that is free of desires. This final duel concerned both prestige and an invaluable high-tier spirit stone. There is no one who could possibly allow this to slip past their fingers.

As such, they were able to empathize with Bi Jianghai as well.

Yin-Yang realm-the harmony of both yin and yang would complement and drive the growth of the other. Upon breaking through to Clarifying Turbidity realm, both yin and yang would amalgamate to form a puddle of murky water. With an hour of conditioning, as the 'clear' rose and the 'turbid' sank, the distinction between the two would gradually become clearer, thus inducing a surge in one's fighting prowess.

However, as Zhang shi's opponent, how could Bi shi possibly watch idly and allow him to do as he pleased?

Unwilling to spare the slightest chance to his opponent, Bi shi immediately called for the resumption of the duel. With this, Zhang shi's breakthrough became the very factor dragging him down.

"Damn it, that cowardly lad!"

"He is completely devoid of the magnanimity a master teacher should have..."

Pavilion Master Kang, Su shi, and the others were leaping in anger.

"Don't worry!"

Seeing everyone worrying for him, Zhang shi smiled, stood up, and proceeded to the stage.

"Zhang shi possesses overwhelming talent that allows you to rival stronger opponents. Even Wu shi and Liao shi were defeated by you. I respect your strength, and I wish to challenge you in a cultivation duel. I hope that you won't turn me down!"

Bi Jianghai raised his hands grandly as he spoke.

"Come!"

Just as the others guessed, this fellow challenged him to a cultivation duel. Zhang Xuan smiled lightly in response to those words.

Hong long!

Hearing Zhang Xuan's affirmation, Bi Jianghai's eyebrows shot up, and he immediately dashed forward with a fist.

He feared that something awry might happen if he were to drag the duel out, and thus, he went at Zhang shi with his full strength right from the start.

The might of a Consonant Spirit realm diffused from the immense might of his fist, as though the ripples from a rock falling into the surface of a body of water. Before the fist could even strike, one could already feel an immense pressure weighing down on

one's soul.

An ordinary Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle expert possessed 1,600,000 ding of strength while a Consonant Spirit realm primary stage expert harnessed a might of 2,000,000 ding.

The fist felt as though a humongous mountain charging towards one. A huge gust of wind burst into the surroundings.

Even though Zhang Xuan's cultivation had risen immensely recently, he had never faced an expert of this caliber before. He felt his blood pumping rapidly through his body, and his meridians seemingly enlarged in anticipation of the battle that was about to come.

"Good!"

Laughing heartily, Zhang Xuan dashed forward and faced that fist with one of his own.

Heaven's Path Divine Fist!

Peng!

With the collision of both fists, Zhang Xuan was forced seven to eight steps back.

In order to examine the might of his physical body, Zhang Xuan opted not to utilize the strength derived from his soul cultivation. As such, he suffered a setback in the very first blow. Nevertheless, with a slight smile on his face, he charged forward once more.

"Humph!"

Seeing the other party charging up to him despite his cultivation still being unstable from the previous breakthrough, Bi Jianghai's eyebrows shot up.

Even though he didn't hurt the other party in the previous encounter, he got a clear glimpse of the other party's current strength-around 1,200,000 ding. That was the level of a Clarifying Turbidity realm intermediate stage expert, but it was still a long way from rivaling his current might.

"Zhang shi, you're indeed a formidable opponent. Your understanding of cultivation is indeed astounding. But... if this is all you've got, I'll be taking the champion seat then!"

With a huge gust of wind, Bi shi opened his fist into a palm and thrust it forcefully in a downward trajectory at Zhang Xuan.

Hong long!

A huge palm print appeared on the stage instantaneously. As though the claws of a ferocious tiger, it fell down onto Zhang Xuan.

"It's... Bi shi's [Great Reversal Adamantine Palm]!"

"This is a Spirit middle-tier pinnacle battle technique! With this move, he is invincible even among those of the same cultivation realm. This is bad!"

"To use his ultimate move at this start of the battle, he sure is vicious!"

...

Seeing the action on the stage, some exclaimed and some gasped in shock.

Great Reversal Adamantine Palm was an extremely powerful fist art, and it was one of the battle techniques that Bi Jianghai specialized in. To use it so early into the battle, it seemed like he intended to end things swiftly.

"Oh? Let's see how powerful this move of yours is!"

Instead of dodging, Zhang Xuan charged up and faced it with yet another fist of his own.

Peng!

As the fist and the palm collided, Zhang Xuan's face reddened, and he was sent flying several meters away like a flying rubber ball before coming to a stop.

It was a little forced for him to catch an attack of a Consonant Spirit realm without tapping into his soul cultivation.

"That's not it, this doesn't seem to be Zhang shi's true strength!"

While watching the duel on stage, amidst the crowd, Wu Tianhao frowned.

In his previous duel with Zhang shi, he was sent flying at the first encounter. While he knew that the other party did use his own momentum against him, the strength the other party displayed definitely didn't just number up to 1,200,000 ding. How could his strength plummet by so much after a breakthrough?

"Indeed. Even if Zhang shi's strength is inferior to the other party, as long as he uses his sword art like he did in my duel, Bi Jianghai will surely be in for a hard time. Why... is he not leveraging his strengths but facing his opponent with brute strength instead?"

Liao Wuzhi also frowned in confusion.

Having exchanged blows with Zhang shi, they understood how fearsome that young man's means and might were. Considering the unbelievable capability he had shown in the previous duel, why was he foolishly crossing fists with Bi Jianghai head-on at this moment?

Peng peng peng peng!

While they were perplexed over the matter, the duo on stage crossed blows several more times. Every single time, Zhang shi would use his full might to face the other party, only to end up knocked back pathetically each time.

At this time, Zhang shi seemed no different from a brute who knew nothing but pure violence.

Someone amidst the crowd suddenly shouted, "Wait... Is it just me or is Zhang shi... only using a single hand? I don't think he has used his other hand throughout the battle?"

Hearing the shout, the crowd suddenly realized that Zhang shi had indeed only been using his right hand throughout the battle. His left hand had been hanging idly by his body, as though it was injured.

"A Clarifying Turbidity realm cultivator facing a Consonant Spirit realm expert with a single hand, what's wrong with him?"

"Could he be injured? No, that can't be it. He used that hand when he was demonstrating a sword art to Liao shi just a moment ago..."

"Could it be that he is handicapping himself? But he's already in a disadvantageous position, why would he do so?"

Everyone also realized that something was wrong, and bewilderment filled their faces.

Only an expert would handicap himself when facing a weaker opponent. Zhang shi was clearly the disadvantageous side, and yet, he was adamantly using only a single hand?

"Wait... It looks like a spirit stone... I think Zhang shi is holding a spirit stone in his left hand!" a sharp-eyed master teacher exclaimed.

"Holding a spirit stone? It can't be... He is trying to absorb spiritual energy while battling to achieve a breakthrough?"

"Now that you say it, it does seem to be the case. But to cultivate in the midst of a battle... Am I dreaming?"

"I think that's really the case. Taking a closer look now, Zhang shi's aura does feel significantly stronger than before!"

...

Noticing the abnormality, the master teachers in the square stared at one another with sheer disbelief reflected in their eyes.

Zhang shi was actually grabbing a spirit stone in his motionless hand. This means that... he had been absorbing spiritual energy non-stop over the course of the battle to reinforce and advance his cultivation!

But how was that possible?

"Incredible! Incredible!"

Naturally, Pavilion Master Kang also noticed this abnormality. A thought surfaced in his mind, and in an instant, his heart suddenly quickened in agitation.

"In Clarifying Turbidity realm, the clearer the distinction between the 'clear' and the 'turbid', the stronger one's cultivation becomes. But to do so would require significant amount of time... Zhang shi knows that he's short on time... The reason why he faced

his Bi shi's attack with brute force instead of skill is not because he's arrogant, but that he intends to use the might from the other party's blows to quicken the separation process and raise his cultivation!"

"Forcefully quicken the separation process of 'clear' and 'turbid'?"

"This... How in the world does he intend to do it?"

Su shi and Ling shi had been trapped in the Clarifying Turbidity realm for a long time now, but they were still unable to advance to pinnacle-tier. Upon hearing that such a method actually existed, they widened their eyes as though they had seen a ghost.

"Bi Jianghai has also barely reached Consonant Spirit realm. Thus, his control over his soul and physical body is still incomplete. As a result, his attacks are tinged with both soul energy and zhenqi. Zhang shi is exploiting this by facing the other party's zhenqi and soul with his own zhenqi and soul respectively. Through this, he can forcefully jolt his body and soul apart..."

A combination of shock and admiration shrouded Pavilion Master Kang's face. "If Zhang shi was a puddle of murky water before, through tapping into the might of the other party's cultivation, he has already jolted the 'turbid' and 'clear' apart, reinforcing his cultivation. In fact, his cultivation is even rising swiftly at the moment!"

"Making use of his opponent's attacks to jolt the 'turbid' and 'clear' apart to raise his cultivation?"

"This... This is too exaggerated!"

Su shi and the others widened their eyes in shock.

The other master teachers who came to the same conclusion also had looks of disbelief on their faces.

To exploit the opponent's flaws to raise one's cultivation in the midst of a battle... If Bi Jianghai were to realize it, he would surely be spurring blood at this moment. He had put his full might into his blows, only to be used by the other party as a whetstone.

"When I was watched Bi shi achieve a breakthrough in his previous duel, I was impressed by his guts and mental fortitude. But after seeing Zhang shi's performance... I realized that his achievement is really nothing much to brag about!"

"Indeed. In the end, achievements are relative. Achieving a breakthrough on the spot against cultivating constantly in the midst of crossing blows, there's really no comparing the two!"

"To use the might of one's opponent to temper oneself... The slightest mistake could possibly lead to tragic outcomes, probably only Zhang shi has the guts to do so!"

...

Since they were able to see through Zhang shi's intentions, naturally, they also understood the dangers in his actions.

When facing a stronger opponent, even if one were to face them with one's full strength, it would still be hard to stand one's ground. On the other hand, Zhang shi was actually multi-tasking in the battle, cultivating constantly as he crossed blows with the other party. How brave and confident of his abilities must he be to actually employ such a tactic?

Even though they were witnessing the sight personally, they still couldn't help but feel frenzied.

"It's fortunate that I lost in a single move. Otherwise, I would only have embarrassed myself more..."

Wu Tianhao smiled bitterly.

Liao Wuzhi also nodded in agreement.

The both of them did feel indignant losing to Zhang shi, but after seeing this sight, they realized that their swift defeat was actually a blessing instead...

To be cooperating as though a fool while your opponent uses you as a cultivation tool, could that be the pinnacle of humiliation?

Soon, Bi Jianghai also came to a realization, and he roared furiously, "Damn it, how dare you take me for a whetstone? Don't even dream about it!"

He thought that if he were to fight the other party before he reinforced his cultivation, the other party would surely panic, resulting in an easy victory for him. Who could have thought that he would end up being used as a whetstone instead? The immensely

stifling frustration in his heart left him on the verge of going insane.

"Damn you!"

Bellowing angrily, his aura surged instantaneously, breaking through the bottleneck of Consonant Spirit realm primary stage.

"Supreme Demented Demon Fist? This is bad..." The face of an elder of Gazing River Sect darkened.



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